

Gender at Work and at Home

**Professional and Parental Identities
in Home-based Telework**

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December 2008

PhD in Management

Management School

(Volume 1)

Abstract

Home-based telework creates a domain where, for mothers and fathers, both a professional and a parental identity might be appropriate. Yet when gendered discourses exist which suggest that women might find more legitimacy in the parental role and men, in the professional role, which of these roles will men and women in telework actually prioritise? How will they engage with these and other discourses, for example those of work life balance, which promise that they can 'have it all'? What identity work is involved and what are the costs and rewards for parents in telework, in terms of constructing satisfactory selves? I address these questions through the analysis of empirical data, acquired through interviews with a sample group of fourteen teleworkers: seven mothers and seven fathers. The data is analysed using a discourse analytic approach, which suggests that discourses are key resources in the manufacture of identity.

My findings suggest that the consistent prioritisation of a singular role is not always possible or desirable for mothers and fathers in telework but that when neither the parental or professional role is prioritised the outcome might be described in terms of painful emotions, expressed by the women in my sample as guilt, and by the men as frustration. I outline five discourses that parents in telework might draw upon in their constructions of self. I also suggest four identity-related 'actions' with which they might engage; and propose three key effects of home-based telework upon the identity construction of professional workers who are also parents. I stress that which 'path' a teleworker takes in their discursive constructions of self, and how they express the experience of this, is likely to depend largely upon the social and material circumstances of the individual teleworker.

Acknowledgements

I am very grateful to my supervisors: Gill Musson in Sheffield, Donald Hislop in Loughborough, and Anne Kerr in Leeds, for their wealth of advice and support and to my examiners who provided extremely useful feedback. I am indebted to the participants who welcomed me into their homes to share their experiences of telework. Thanks to Tracy Scurry, Joanne Roberts, John Leopold, and other colleagues from Newcastle University Business School for their general encouragement. Thanks too to my family and friends who put up with me throughout this process! This thesis was completed with funding from the White Rose Scholarship Scheme SHE 5003.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

Introduction

In this opening chapter I provide a rationale for conducting the present study at this juncture in time, articulating the specific research questions, as well as outlining the philosophy behind the research undertaken. Finally I describe, for the readers' information, how this document is structured and what is to come in the subsequent chapters. First though I present some background detail explaining how the focus of this project developed.

Background to the study

This volume is the culmination of my contribution to a research project on the topic of home-based telework funded by The White Rose Consortium and based within The Management School, University of Sheffield. I was recruited to study the gender related aspects of telework due to my academic background in both organisation studies and gender studies, where I have previously conducted research into the reasons for women's' occupational choices (Marsh, 2002) and the experiences of men and women in gender atypical careers (Marsh, 2003). At the outset of this project, in the autumn of 2003, my area of interest was given the working title 'home-based telework, gender and career' but this has developed over time to become more specifically about how home-based telework interacts with the reproduction of gendered identities in the domains of parenthood and career. Here I attempt to trace how the topic of study was refined and how this has led to the production of the document that you now see before you.

Having begun with the two concepts of 'gender' and 'career', and the context of 'home-based telework', I was given the freedom to contemplate the relationships and frictions that might exist between them. It was apparent to me, having previously explored women's experiences in the labour market, that one of the main impacts upon an individual's career is having a family. How becoming a parent might limit women's careers in particular has been given

some attention both in gender studies and organisational research in recent years but when I sought to explore how men's parental roles might affect their careers I quickly realised that a knowledge gap exists around this topic. I began to think more broadly about connections between work and family and found that it was impossible to ignore the wealth of studies on 'work life balance', with flexible working options, such as telework, frequently being cited as a solution which allows parents, and mothers in particular, to manage a career and a family harmoniously together. This initially seemed to neatly close the triangle linking the three terms: home-based telework, gender and career, which had formed my initial focus. But I soon found that this, being a fairly obvious link, had been explored time and again by researchers, and so offered little chance for me to make an original contribution. My search for a connection between these terms continued until various readings (including Baruch, 2000 and Brocklehurst, 2001) prompted me to see that 'identity' might be a useful conceptual link between gender (especially parenting) and career in telework. I decided to explicitly focus on parental identities and professional identities, as these seem to be the most gendered of all roles in our contemporary society, and indeed, due to their interconnectivity, the gendering of roles in one domain is likely to perpetuate the gendering of roles in the other. A lot of literature on home-based work has already described the blurring of spatial (see for example Felstead et al, 2005) and temporal boundaries (see for example Tietze and Musson, 2002) between work and home but how this affects the ways in which individuals construct themselves, as parents and as professionals, in this ambiguous context, is an area which, by comparison, has been overlooked. Studies have also examined the struggles of women in home-based work, but claims about how men experience working from home are largely speculative, which suggests that actual empirical research with such a focus is rare.

The title I finally arrived at for this thesis: 'Gender at work and at home'¹ deliberately has two different meanings. It of course refers to the spatial location of gendered roles, as existing in the physical spaces of both work and of home (which in the context of telework, happens to be one and the same) but in its

¹ I wish to acknowledge that Gill Musson inspired this title, when she named an article which we recently co-wrote 'Men at work and at home' (Marsh and Musson, 2008)

other sense it also suggests gender as a process, where 'at work' can be also read as 'operating' or 'functioning', highlighting its dynamic productive and reproductive nature (more on this view of gender can be found in chapter 2). In the following section I provide a further rationale for the focus of this study, explaining why exploring the gendered nature of roles is important and also why the context of home-based telework provides such a unique and fertile context for the examination of these. I conclude the following section with a summary of the research questions.

Why examine gendered identities in the context of telework?

Men and women clearly demonstrate biological differences (though some theorists of gender even dispute the extent to which these have been exaggerated by orthodox science over the last centuries – see Harding, 1986 and Haraway, 1997); not least of these differences is having, or not having, the ability to produce offspring, but it is usually the cultural differences between men and women in society which primarily concern theorists of gender. What it means to be a man or a woman in our society might be viewed as socially determined, bound by ideas of what is legitimate behaviour for each of the sexes in a variety of domains; ideas which many propose are internalised by boys and girls at an early age and which are compounded through interaction with others, by a process of socialisation toward 'appropriate' gender roles (see Connell, 1995). This can be seen as having created a binary understanding of gender, polarising expectations for the behaviour men and women. The notion of patriarchy suggests that furthermore men attract more cultural power than women, and behaviours deemed masculine are often imbued with more prestige than those deemed feminine (Davies-Netzley, 1998). In the world of work and professional careers, for example, it has traditionally been men who have succeeded in attaining positions of high standing, leaving our labour markets segregated both horizontally and vertically by gender, which is evident in the differential pay levels, and often in the career aspirations and ultimate occupational choices, of men and women. This is particularly significant at the present time, as success in paid employment can be seen to signify success in life generally in a culture of extreme capitalism, as is much of western society

today; and a highly paid job also opens the doors to material wealth which often underpins access to, and control of, resources in other domains, thereby perpetuating the status quo of inequality between the sexes.

Women on the other hand, seemingly bound by their biological abilities, have traditionally been seen as parents first and foremost, with domestic as well as maternal responsibilities, playing supporting roles not only to their children but also to their husbands (and sometimes to their extended families). Nevertheless women are nowadays increasingly seeking success in professional roles and men are publicly expressing desires to be more involved parents, which hints at a loosening of the strict societal code which expects women to primarily be parents and men to prioritise their careers in order to act as breadwinners for their families. This has led to a focus on the concept of work life balance in organisational studies, and to policy makers seeking to promote and legislate for ways in which the two roles of parent and professional might co-exist for both men and women. Flexible forms of work, such as telework, are often celebrated for offering a panacea for such practical, as well as ontological, struggles but it remains a matter of debate whether these do indeed lead to the harmonious balancing of these two roles, or indeed social equality, for men and women.

Home-based telework is one of a number of flexible working options which organisations are increasingly offering to employees as part of an espoused move towards an ideal of a 'flexible firm' (Guest, 1987) which can be seen as a key part of the rhetoric of Human Resource Management approaches (Legge, 2005; Sissons, 1994) which are very much in vogue in mainstream management education and practice today. Such approaches have however received attention from critical theorists of organisation precisely due to the rhetorical nature of such moves. Whilst promising to offer flexibility and autonomy to workers, many such policies can be seen to intensify work through soliciting the increased commitment of the worker to the organisation and its values (Wilmott, 1993), whilst at the same time reducing job security by reducing the commitment of the organisation to the worker (for example by removing long term contracts or reducing the possibility of genuine career progression). Research on telework is divided in terms of whether it concludes

that this form of work offers benefits to those who engage in it, as well as to organisations themselves, or if it is experienced negatively. The wider social outcome of gender equality has been fleetingly examined in the context of telework but, to my knowledge, there has never been a thorough examination of the lived reality of telework in relation to how gendered roles are perpetuated or resisted, and how these are experienced, by mothers and fathers working from home. I believe that home-based telework provides a unique context for the examination of gendered identities as the key roles of parent and professional are forced to exist together in such close temporal and spatial proximity. This has led me to formulate the following research questions:

- **How does home-based telework interact with the reproduction of gendered parental and professional identities?**
- **What identity work is required by parents in home-based telework?**
- **What are the identity-related costs / rewards for parents in home-based telework?**

Underpinning Philosophy

It is important to situate any piece of research in terms of its epistemology as early as possible and so that is what I aim to do in this section of the introductory chapter. My approach draws upon a social constructionist philosophy which leads to a view of reality as subjectively experienced and created through social interaction (therefore one might more accurately describe multiple realities than a singular reality). This leads to ontological conflicts with much mainstream research, which explicitly or implicitly seeks to discover a definitive truth about a situation or phenomena. This search for quasi-scientific knowledge is prominent in orthodox organisation studies, which also lean toward managerialism, that is, they aim to provide prescriptions for managers which essentially underpin the instrumental rationality which maintains managerial prerogative and imbalances of power in and around organisational life. Critical theory, which is increasingly being recognised as an

umbrella of different heterodox approaches to understanding organisations, is fundamentally concerned with highlighting issues of power and control and proposes a more interpretivist epistemological attitude to research: one which seeks to provide rich description and tentative explanations from a variety of standpoints, rather than providing facts and conclusions, which seems to be the ambition of much conventional management research and indeed education. In the critical school the focus of research is broadened to include parties who are traditionally often overlooked, for example the workers who are subject to, or actually experiencing, organisational phenomenon, and their broader social networks; and the aim is often to inspire radical change, at least in the ways we understand organisations and the behaviour of people within them.

I am attracted to the critical interpretivist paradigm, which informs both my research and teaching, because I do not see how it is possible to predict human behaviour. We are not rational beings, despite much organisational behaviour literature denying the role of emotion in our decision-making, as if people can somehow be stripped of their humanity on entering their place of work (it is another quirk of telework that it is performed in the home – a domain which is usually acknowledged as being imbued with emotion). I am seduced more by views of organisations as psychic prisons (Morgan, 1986) where power, politics and conflict are ever present. I am keen to understand how people experience organisational life, not just for the benefit of a small number of owners of industry, whom orthodox research seems implicitly to serve, but for all of the people whose labour, lives and identities are bound up in organisations. The epistemological position, which I have spelt out above, provides a foundation for the present study. It has undoubtedly shaped my choice of topic and the development of specific research questions; my choice of which people I have selected as participants; how I have chosen to collect the data; and how I have come to understand it. The methodology of discourse analysis can be seen to share some of the fundamental assumptions of social constructionism: that 'it is through the daily interactions between people in the course of social life that our versions of knowledge become fabricated' (Burr, 1995, p4) and that all knowledge is historically and culturally situated, informed by dominant discourses which inform legitimate 'ways of being' in specific contexts. This is why it appeals to me in the context of home-based telework – as I explain

above, gendered discourses of parenting and of professionalism might provide a disciplinary mechanism to constitute particular and differential forms of subjectivity for men and women in this mode of work. Discourse analysis allows the exploration of how such discourses operate, how they are utilised and experienced, and indeed how they might be resisted.

Thesis Overview

In the following chapter, chapter two, I present a critical review of the existing literature which relates to the topics covered by this project in order to see what other people from a variety of perspectives have said about these matters. I aim to make clear where my affiliations lie and why this is; where definitions of concepts are ambiguous I aim to clarify what it is that I will be specifically referring to in this project; and eventually I aim to draw together these diverse literatures, providing a picture of how they specifically relate to the present study. I begin with the context of telework, discussing its origins and considering how various theorists have defined it to date. I also report on demographic and geographic factors relating to its uptake. Next I consider the nature of identity, firstly by examining traditional psychological explanations, then moving towards post-modern ideas such as 'role', the self as performative, and identity as socially and discursively constructed (ideas of social constructionism and discourse receive fuller attention in chapter three, where I outline my philosophical and methodological approach). In the next two sections of the literature review I discuss the related areas of gender and parenting, describing how gender has previously been researched and providing a snapshot of levels of gendered employment in the UK at the present time, as well as figurative images of motherhood and fatherhood in the UK today. Career is the next topic of consideration, and here I chart the move towards a view of career as a social construction which produces 'professional identities'. The notion of 'family friendly' careers is also discussed before I move on to attempt a synthesis of all of these topics, as I present telework as having the ability to affect the boundaries between the domains work and home and between the roles of parent and professional, and question what the outcomes of this might be.

In chapter three I explain further the philosophy behind the empirical investigation, as well as the practicalities of how the data was collected and analysed. In order to do so I present an overview of existing definitions of, and approaches to, discourse analysis, before describing how I developed my own. In chapter four I present the findings of the research. I begin with a description of each of the participants, which the reader can refer back to whenever necessary. I go on to describe which roles the men and women questioned prioritise in their interviews with me; how the context of home-based telework may have impacted upon their choices; and how these roles are described and experienced by the participants. I conclude this chapter with a concise list outlining the key findings of my research.

In chapter five I discuss these findings in more detail, beginning with a direct comparison of the findings to the existing literature. This leads to an outline of my overall thesis: that parents in telework might follow one of three paths, utilising five key discourses. I explain how each of these paths might be selected and experienced, describing the possible 'work' required and the costs and rewards of each of these options for teleworking parents. In chapter 6, the final chapter, I explicitly address each research question in turn. I also reflect upon the key contributions and limitations of this project, in particular concerning the philosophy and methods employed in this project - questioning how successful these have been in addressing the questions set. This final chapter also allows for recommendations to be made to management practitioners; teleworkers and potential teleworkers; and for future researchers of gendered identities in telework, and of other related topics.

Chapter Conclusion

In this introductory chapter I have outlined the genesis of the present study, I have provided a rationale for its focus at this specific time, and have clearly stated the research questions. I have discussed the philosophy behind the study and introduced the methods employed to collect new empirical data in order to address the research questions. Finally I have presented an overview of how this document is structured, what is to come, and how this will be

presented. In the next chapter the relevant literatures are reviewed and given critical consideration in relation to the aims of this study.

Chapter 2 - Review of Existing Literature

Introduction

In this part of my thesis I present a review of key literatures surrounding the research issues, as outlined in chapter one, and provide further rationale for the examination of parental and professional identities in the context of home-based telework at the present time. The chapter begins with specific attention to definitions of telework, as well as exploring its main drivers. I consider for whom, where and, in particular, why it is becoming more popular. Next I present the broad topic of identity, leading to discussions of identity as a series of socially constructed roles produced with reference to dominant discourses. I then turn to issues of gender, before presenting traditional and contemporary 'images' of both motherhood and fatherhood. Likewise both 'old' and 'new' ideas of career are subsequently discussed, leading to notions of 'professional identity'. The final part of the literature review synthesises the preceding themes, asking how telework might interact with both the parental and professional sides of identity. This chapter, therefore, provides further support for my study by identifying tensions, assumptions, and gaps in existing published research.

Defining Telework

In this initial section of the literature review I explore the nature of telework, how it can be defined and categorised; the demographic issues involved; and the scale of uptake. I also consider the factors driving its ongoing usage, and touch briefly on the reported origins of this way of working.

Definitions and Parameters

I begin by addressing what Felstead and Jewson (2000, p11) term 'the thorny question of definitions'. Indeed there seems to be some consensus that telework 'poses definitional problems' (Dex and McCulloch, 1997, p50), leading

Tietze and Musson (2002, p321) to remark that there is a 'lack of agreed definitions of telework or census information'. This makes the question of defining who is and is not a teleworker a slippery one. To refine our understanding, Mitchell (1996) proposes that both micro (personal) and macro level (organisational and broader societal) parameters should be identified to define different types of telework. Daniels et al (2001) suggest that there are five key variables in the way people work remotely, these are:

Location – time spent in different places ie. at home, in the company's office, or on the road

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Usage – the level of use and various forms of technology required

Knowledge Intensity – How much autonomy a person has over their work and how tangible the outputs are

Intra- organisation Contact – the level of contact with colleagues and management within the employing organisation

Extra- organisation Contact – the level of contact with (potential) customers / clients and suppliers outside of the employing organisation

Sullivan (2003, p159) is keen to stress that these variables might be more usefully conceptualised 'as continua rather than dichotomies or distinct categories'. She challenges the assertion that a single definition should be used for all research and argues that project-specific definitions are both useful and inevitable. As my interest lies in exploring the relationship between work and home, professional and family life, location is the more pertinent factor, and I have decided to focus exclusively on **home-based** telework. My overriding concern, in selecting a definition, is that participants should spend sufficient time engaging in paid work in the home sphere for this to have an impact upon their identity construction, both as parents and as workers. Yet I am also concerned that a distinction should be drawn between traditional forms of 'home-working', which tends to be largely manual repetitive labour performed by unskilled women for low pay (which has been well-researched in recent years, see Phizacklea and Wolkowitz, 1995 for example), and home-based telework, which requires the use of new technologies, and tends to be carried out by higher skilled and paid workers, performing knowledge based work, with

autonomy and flexibility (Haddon and Byrnin, 2005). Some researchers see the employment status of workers as crucial (eg. Standen et al, 1999), yet as Sullivan (2003, p163) proposes 'conducting separate research on employed and self-employed teleworkers is not the only way of acknowledging that self-employment can mediate or moderate the impact of work at home', this can simply be used as a further category of distinction when it comes to analysing the data collected. Felstead et al (2000) point out that, as self-employed people make up such a large percentage of those who work from home, it would be churlish to exclude them from research. Consequently, with these parameters in mind, the project-specific definition of a home-based teleworker I have created, and will utilise throughout this thesis, is:

'A professional worker who works from their home for at least half of their paid working hours, either as an employee or through contractual obligations to one or more organisations, and who utilises ICTs as a key part of their role'

By creating a unique and tailored definition (albeit informed by the ideas of other researchers in this field, especially Huws, 1993) I have created a tool or yardstick which I feel is necessary to provide some boundaries to ensure that my sample group reflects the aims of my research (as outlined in chapter 1), but I also acknowledge that this has rendered my findings difficult to generalise or compare with other studies. Whilst some might see this as problematic, Sullivan (2003, p163) states that 'in exploratory research that deals with concepts where there is debate about conceptualisations and definitions, project-specific definitions can be useful for refining future definitions and can help to guide future sampling strategies'. Crucially though, it is important to state here that generalisability and comparison are not the aims of this project, rather I am seeking to explore and understand people's diverse experiences of an increasingly popular mode of work and its interactions with constructions of the self.

Demographics and Scale

As there is no consensus on who is and is not a teleworker, figures on its uptake are wide ranging and do not provide a consistent picture, though most commentators agree that telework usage is rising (Felstead and Jewson, 2000; Hotopp, 2002 etc). Huws et al (1999, p1) attempted the 'measuring and mapping' of international trends with regards to different forms of telework. They conclude that 'home-based teleworking is a form of working which is likely to be found on a significant scale when a number of preconditions are met' (p37). These include 'broad access to telecommunications, relatively deregulated labour markets OR the existence of collective agreements supportive of this form of working, household size and structure which permit space for private working, and the existence of appropriate skills in the population' (p37, original emphasis). It has therefore been largely in Anglo-Saxon and Nordic countries that this form of working has thrived, with 'less developed' countries utilizing it to a lesser extent.

Tietze (2005, p50) confirms that 'some progress has been made in identifying and understanding the spread, depth and patterns of 'working from home' practices, their incidence and range in relation to local labour markets'. Haddon and Brynin (2005), for example, report empirical data in an attempt at 'mapping the prevalence and contours of the telework phenomenon' (p34). They not only attempt to explore the character of telework, but also the characteristics of teleworkers themselves. They propose that 'there are gender, educational, occupational, and pay differences' (p44) between the different categories and ways in which people telework. For instance, they suggest that it is men of higher occupational status, who are more likely to utilise technology as a key feature of their telework. Haddon and Brynin (2005) conclude that 'telework reflects traditional categories of work' (p44) and existing social status is not necessarily changed by its adoption. Their analysis suggests that 'telework tells us more about the teleworker than about the nature of telework itself' (p44). Felstead et al (2002, p204) compared and contrasted 'the demographic and employment characteristics of those who have the option to work at home with those who actually carry out paid work where they live'. Their results suggest

that 'having the opportunity to choose where to work represents another perk for those already occupying an advantaged position in the labour market' (p204).

The only ONS (the UK Office for National Statistics) figures currently available, which specifically concern telework, are now 6 years old (Hotopp, 2002) and also rely upon a rather broad definition - that teleworkers are those who work from home for at least 1 day a week and require a computer and telephone to do so - thus can only be seen as a blunt instrument. Nevertheless they indicate that 2.2 million people in the UK were engaged in telework at that time (7.4% of the population) and this figure was predicted to rise dramatically, by around 13% each year subsequently. This can be compared to the findings of a European Union funded study (Sustel, published 2004) which was coincidentally also conducted in 2002, and which uses a similarly broad definition. The authors estimate that there were 10 million teleworkers in the EU as a whole at that time (13% of the total workforce) and add that '2-3 days a week at home is the optimum for most people' (Sustel, 2004, p7). The authors also point out that 'many people change their teleworking pattern daily, weekly, or monthly, depending on the tasks to be completed, personal preferences and other factors' (Sustel, 2004, p7), highlighting a lack of homogeneity and predictability amongst teleworkers, which adds to the difficulties associated with quantitative measurement of this group.

In terms of gender, ONS research suggests that around two-thirds of teleworkers in the UK are male, which Hotopp (2002) claims is likely to be due to the fact that more men than women are self-employed, and self-employed workers account for a high proportion of those working from home. This research also suggests that female teleworkers are more likely to be performing 'clerical / administrative work' in the home whilst men are more likely to be engaged in 'professional work', which concurs with Haddon and Brynin's (2005) assertion that telework reflects the overall distribution of men and women in occupational categories, and provides further rationale for my aim of exploring professional identities in this mode of work, which, it seems, continue to be gendered. Felstead et al (2002) also claim that male teleworkers are more likely

to only work from home on an occasional basis, whilst female teleworkers are likely to spend most if not all of their working hours based at home.

Drivers of Telework

Brannen et al (1994, p13) claim that telework was first introduced 'in 1969, at a time when the computer industry was expanding rapidly with the consequent problem of skill shortages' but thus far I have shown telework to be difficult to define and measure, leading to uncertainty amongst theorists. One of the few areas of consensus is that its usage is increasing, but what are the reasons for its attractiveness? And who, or what, is behind this rise in uptake? Again it seems that there is no simple answer to these questions; indeed this is an area which has inspired some critical debate. Mcloskey and Igbaria (in Igbaria and Tan, 1998) categorise the reasons for the growth of telework in terms of employee demands; societal demands; and organisational demands, though I find that these categories overlap considerably. Below I expand on these, drawing on further literature to provide examples, in order to give an overview of the broad range of factors said to be driving the increase in this way of working at the present time.

Cascio (1992) proposes that there have been attitudinal changes in terms of the quality of working environment that employees demand, leading to many choosing to spend some (if not all) of their time working from their own homes. Galinsky and Stein (1990) also report the growing expectation of employees to be able to balance leisure, family and work and that where technology is available to enable remote working, this will be offered to them (Mcloskey and Igbaria in Igbaria and Tan, 1998). Blossfield and Drobnic (2001) report that changes in family structures, eg. the increase in dual earner households (which demand at least one partner be responsible for arranging child and eldercare, where required), is forcing many to consider more flexible working options. Home-based working is also said to be employed in order to address environmental concerns, related to the emissions caused by mass commuting (Kitou and Horvath, 2006) – as well as remove the stress and frustration caused by the daily commute (Mann et al, 2000).

It is said that organisations might offer home-based working in order to attract and retain staff, particularly in areas of high skill shortages (Brannen et al, 1994). Telework policies might also be employed to satisfy legislation ensuring equal access to employment for carers and disabled workers (West and Anderson, 2005). Fenson and Hill (2004) report that such policies have also been utilised to meet contingency requirements in case of disasters, which has come to the fore following events such as 9/11. Harpaz (2002) claims that telework can be used as a means of cutting expenditure on real estate as office space demands are reduced (though this neglects the expensive start up costs of telework) and might also allow an organisation to build a reputation as a 'modern' employer (Mcloskey and Igbaria in Igbaria and Tan, 1998). Collins (2005) found that whilst 'teleworkers are 23% (net) more productive than office-based workers' (p121), the financial impact of telework on the case study organisation he examined (a business unit of Lloyd's of London) was 'virtually neutral' (p122) and overall concludes that 'the business case for teleworking was not strong in this particular case' (p125).

The type of work performed in the home changes across time and cultures (Phizacklea and Wolkowitz, 1995) and nowadays both technological innovations, and changing managerial strategies and organisational structures, have opened up new possibilities. Fuller and more critical discussion is required of these key components, popularly claimed to be driving the growth of telework. Firstly these 'new' organisational structures and approaches to management require critical examination. Secondly the extent to which technology can legitimately be called a driver in the growth of telework – a claim which abounds the literature – will be brought into question.

Changing Organisations

Towards the end of the last century orthodox management literature proclaimed the arrival of post-Fordism (see Amin, 1994) and post-bureaucratic ways of structuring work and organisations, and managing the people within them. Hecksher (1994) described an 'ideal type' post-bureaucracy; the central themes of this model are paraphrased below by Grey (2006, p483):

- 'Rules are replaced with consensus and dialogue based upon personal influence rather than status. People are trusted to act on the basis of shared values rather than rules.
- Responsibilities are assigned on the basis of competence for tasks rather than hierarchy, and are treated as individuals rather than impersonally.
- The organisation has an open boundary, so that rather than full-time permanent employment people come into and out of the organisation in a flexible way, including part-time, temporary and consultancy arrangements. Work is no longer done in fixed hours or at a designated place'.

As with any 'ideal type' (such as that relating to bureaucracy, described by Weber decades before Hecksher described 'post-bureaucracy') one should of course remain critical of its application to actual organisations in real-life social settings. As critics have shown, post-bureaucratic approaches might be more 'rhetoric' than reality (Legge, 2005). Indeed there is little empirical evidence that 'pure' post -bureaucracy exists (see Delbridge, 1998; Thompson and Warhurst, 1998). All the same, conceptualisations of post-bureaucracy have led to the advocating of 'flexible firms' (Guest, 1987), and provide a context in which the spatial (and often temporal) flexibility offered by home-based telework is seen as particularly attractive.

The growth of home-based telework can also be seen to align with a growing interest in Human Relations approaches to management, associated with post-bureaucracy. 'Trust' and 'empowerment' form the central rhetoric of such 'people-centred' management styles and these are said to facilitate a move away from an overt 'control culture' style of management, supposedly allowing workers more autonomy, which some claim is most visible in giving the chance to work out of the direct gaze of management (Lamond, 2000) (though this overlooks more subtle or electronic forms of surveillance). Yet again though, critics have voiced concerns over the extent to which such approaches really

represent a move away from the instrumental rationality associated with bureaucracy (Grey, 2005). Wilmott (1993) for example proposes that such approaches should be viewed with extreme caution, due to the seeming desire of organisations to control the 'hearts and minds' as well as the physical labour of workers, which he views as a sinister, Orwellian goal.

Grey (2006) also suggests that the lived experience of post-bureaucratic and Human Relations approaches shows them to be by no means the utopian panacea that advocates propose. Rather he suggests that employees experience 'flexibility' as anxiety, due to the loss of security and direction; workers are said to experience an intensification of time pressures; and overall post-bureaucracy 'places the accent on the responsibility of individuals to manage their careers and lives without collective protection' (p501).

Questioning the Technological Imperative

Orlikowski and Barley (2001) promote the idea that the body of research on technology and research on organisations can and should compliment one another; and telework provides an exemplary context for this to occur. One field that critical organisation studies might benefit from is STS (social studies of science and technology). Developed in the 1970s, leading figures (including Wajcman, 2002; Haraway, 1997; and Harding, 1986) drew upon feminist theory to argue that technology is 'a socio-technical product': 'a technological system is never merely technical. It has organisational, economic, and political elements' (Wilson, 2004, p283).

A common representation of the role of technology in much of the telework literature is 'as an external autonomous force exerting an influence on society' (Wajcman, 2002, p351). Dwelly and Bennion (2003, p5), for example, suggest that technology acted as both 'a driver and a facilitator' in the genesis of telework, and Fernando (2005) goes further suggesting that new technology is a driver behind rethinking the workspaces of the future more generally. Wilson (2004, p282), presenting an STS perspective, proposes that seeing technology as a driver of change verges on 'technological determinism'. She claims that

this argument is too simplistic as technological change itself 'is shaped by the social circumstances in which it takes place' (2004, p282):

'Technology is not simply the product of rational technical imperatives; a particular technology will not simply triumph because it is the best. We need to look at the social decisions behind technological developments, for example why a technological change was seen to be compelling, when the decision making could have been challenged, and what counts as superior'

Wilson (2004, p282)

Marcuse (1968) was amongst the first to propose that science and technology are socially constituted. Prior to that a positivist conception of science and technology, as 'ideologically pure, value-free and above all neutral' (Wajcman, 2002, p349), reigned supreme, and it could be argued that this stance still dominates scientific arenas today. Wajcman (2002, p350) outlines how the Frankfurt School (writing in the late 1960s and early 1970s) developed a radical critique of science as 'directed towards profit and warfare'. This led to a Marxist critique, which sought to expose 'the class character of science and its links with capitalist methods of production,' (Wajcman, 2002, p350). An example of how the development of the tools of telework might be driven by a capitalist, rather than a technological, imperative comes from Daniels et al (2001), who list some of the companies who have high profile teleworking policies (for example Canon, BT, IBM and Rank-Xerox). They comment that these are all companies that have products which would facilitate telework and would therefore undoubtedly profit from its growth. They conclude 'such large firms can legitimise the practice by advertising the benefits' (p1167). In further support of this claim Collins (2005, p116) reports on examples of telework research which he suggests were 'sponsored by 'new economy' enterprises with their own agenda'.

Telework emerges here as an elusive and indistinct category of employment (though I have attempted to pin down a clearer definition for the sake of operationalising my current research). It can be seen as a mode of work growing in popularity, with drivers perceived as coming from workers themselves, organisations, and broader society. It is proposed though, that

organisations, who appear to have the most to gain, are most vehemently driving the spread of telework, which requires substantial investments in new technologies to facilitate it. From the limited statistical evidence available, some differences in terms of gendered usage are revealed and some propose that this, in itself, points to issues of inequality (Felstead et al, 2002). Whether telework simply reflects the inequalities of broader society or whether it might, in some way, magnify these, (or even redress these, as is suggested in literature presented later in this chapter) is yet to be seen, and is a crucial question which my thesis will aim to address.

The nature of Identity

Tietze and Musson (2002, p330) suggest that 'working at home brings to the forefront important questions about the formation of human characters and identities'. I suggest that one reason for this is because it provides a unique context where both the professional and parental self might legitimately be presented. Here I provide a critical view of how the idea of identity has traditionally been defined, largely by the field of psychology. I then introduce more post-modern explanations, exploring Goffman's (1959) work on role and dramaturgy, then presenting the perspective of social constructionism, which I see as key to understanding identity.

Mainstream theories of Identity

Mainstream theories can be seen as those which are held to be traditional and 'common sense' explanations of events, and are those which do not necessarily seek to challenge the status quo or given rationality shared by a discipline (Alvesson and Wilmott, 1996). Collinson (2003, p527) discusses how 'Western thinking has traditionally viewed human beings as unitary, coherent and autonomous individuals who are separate and separable from social relations and organizations' and Hall (in du Gay, 1995, p17) describes a common belief in identity as 'that stable core of the self, unfolding from beginning to end through all the vicissitudes of history without change; the bit of the self which

remains always-ready, 'the same', identical to itself across time'. This approach, which can be termed essentialist – due to the inherent belief in an essential core to the self which is one's unchanging identity - is prevalent in the popular imagination, as well as in mainstream academia and in particular the field of psychology. Freud (see Bateman and Holmes, 1995), the 'founding father' of psychoanalytic theory, for example, proposed that we have a 'real' psychic identity as well as the social identity we perform for others. Hall (in du Gay, 1995, p17) furthermore proposes that identity has been commonly seen as 'that collective or 'true' self hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed selves'.

Henriques et al (1984, p13) highlight a major theoretical flaw in mainstream psychology's views of identity. They propose that 'psychology neglected the social world' and that it was unable to successfully bridge 'the individuals – society divide'. Henriques et al (ibid, p1) also propose a more sinister side to psychological approaches by stressing 'the importance of modern psychology in producing many of the apparatuses of social regulation which affect the daily lives of us all'. Whereas many radical critiques (largely from feminism, humanism and socialism) argue that psychology is 'a monolithic force of oppression and distortion which constrains and enchains individuals' (ibid, p1), Henriques et al (1984) further propose that psychology is in fact a 'productive' force: 'it has helped to constitute the very form of modern individuality... it regulates, classifies, and administers; it produces those regulative devices which form us' (p1). Recourse to psychological explanations, with their 'implicit ideologies' (p13), they propose, has reinforced dominant political positions by perpetuating the status quo. Parker (1998, p2) agrees that the social inequalities, which we still see today, have been maintained by 'those who simply care for the scientific status of psychology'. Burr (in Parker, 1998) proposes that this has been achieved through the charade of psychology as an 'a-political' body of knowledge engaging in 'value-free' practices.

Views of identity which propose that a 'true self' is contained within us, informed by factors such as our genetics, can easily lead to claims of collectivism, for example amongst people of the same race or gender - that they must have an identical biological core (Hall, in du Gay, 1995) which dictates (and therefore

can be used to predict) behaviour. This 'fait accompli' view of identity has been a key area of contention and source of much criticism of the essentialist approach. As Grey (2006, p502) surmises 'it promotes the view that whatever choices are made they will have no effect, it encourages fatalism and quietism and is therefore a political problem'. Another major critique of essentialist individual approaches, as touched on above, is that they fail to take into account social structures, which may enable or constrain access to certain modes of being (Walby, 1988). Burkitt (1991) concludes that there is a dichotomy between theories that take an 'individual perspective' of identity, and those that are based on the pretext that identity is not fixed in advance of social interaction but is constructed *in* interaction (Wacjman, 2002). In this latter view 'society and the individual are no longer viewed as two separate entities' (Burkitt, 1991, p2). Consequently, in the individualistic perspective, issues of power and control are neglected, which I see as this approach's main downfall – these issues become the central focus when a critical perspective (as outlined in chapter 1) is taken.

Post-Modern takes on Identity

The post-modern movement provides a radical challenge to orthodox, traditional, and mainstream views: 'post-modernity is the beginning of the end of innocence and also the beginning of responsibility for the good and evil we do... no longer can we blame God and/or Nature for the many forms of social life we erect and in which we must perforce live out our lives' (Young, 1990, p6). It challenges both the nature of organisations, and how identities are constructed and played out within them. In this section I begin by describing what I see as a key step towards post-modern ideas of identity: the work of Erving Goffman (1959), who describes identity as 'performative' and constituted through the adoption of a series of social roles. This leads to conceptions of the self as 'socially constructed' and discursively constituted, therefore here I also begin to introduce the philosophy behind social constructionism.

Social Roles and Performative Selves

Ideas of 'role' are key to post-modern views of identity and can be seen as 'a useful conceptual bridge between personal identity and society' (Billington et al, 1998, p52), which was notably absent from mainstream views. The idea of 'role' as integral to identity was not a new one at the time Goffman (1959) wrote, but the perspective he took was. The traditional view of roles is functionalist, seeing them as fixed, inflexible, and universal (see Biddle, 1979 for an example of this), but Goffman takes an interactionist perspective, describing roles as fluid and as constantly negotiated between individuals as they engage in social interaction. The post-modern view (which Goffman might be seen as a trailblazer for) therefore challenges psychological notions of identity as static and as situated somehow 'within us', bringing it into the social, interactional, realm. Goffman (1959) proposes that roles in society, such as 'parent' and 'professional', each have their own set of goals, behaviours, practices and often vocabularies. This set of 'norms' shapes our expectations of what is legitimate for an individual occupying a specific role. He believes that people will work hard to maintain a show of consistency in these pre-ordained roles, but, crucially, also suggests that these norms can be revised over time and might differ in changing contexts.

Expanding on the theatrical metaphor Goffman states that identity is performative. He (1959, cited in Branaman 2001) discusses that when we meet a person 'many sources of information become accessible and many carriers (or 'sign-vehicles') become available' to enable us to categorise a person in our own minds. These sources of information may be visual signs as well as the information broadcast through language. Goffman also stresses that the context, or physical location of the meeting helps us to categorise a person and therefore glean information about their identity, though he warns of the dangers of using untested stereotypes to determine something about a person through a short encounter. Goffman defines two different kinds of 'sign activity' involving the expression one 'gives' and the expression 'given off' by an individual, raising the question of whether, we as presenters of identities, can ever be entirely in control of the way we are perceived or 'read' by others. As well as 'sign activity'

he also identified 'sign equipment' involving 'props such as clothes' (Fincham and Rhodes, 1994, p134) that a person can draw on to support their 'act'.

Using Goffman's theory of 'Dramaturgical' (performing) selves Collinson (2003, p538) proposes that there is a tendency to present one's self 'in a favourable light' in organizational settings. This, he claims, is 'more likely to emerge where employees feel highly visible, threatened, defensive, subordinated and / or insecure' and when 'surveillance systems tend to make individuals increasingly aware of themselves as visible objects, under the gaze of those in authority' (Collinson, 2003, p538). Miller and Morgan (1993) agree that a dramaturgical self can be consciously used as a 'survival strategy', particularly in organisations with cultures of inequality, sometimes as a tool of emancipation or, at the least, as a way to get by.

Goffman's theories suggest that there are two sides to identity: our outer performative self and our inner cognitive self – but he is far removed from essentialist ideas of identity as he proposes that it is the external social factors that have the most influence on our presentations of self (taking a 'nurture over nature' stance). In fact in this view he is seen by some as stressing social factors too strongly and is widely criticised for suggesting that people are 'social dopes' (Potter and Wetherell, 1987 in Coopland 2001), not able to control or understand their own presentations of self. The accepted view of his time was that identity performance is for the benefit of other people but he diverged by claiming that in fact the 'performer' is to some extent taken in by their own act: 'he can be sincerely convinced that the impression of reality which he stages is the real reality' (Goffman, 1959 in Branaman 2001, p178).

Social constructionist perspectives on identity

My own perspective on identity utilises a social constructionist philosophy and sees roles as produced through, and reproducing, dominant discourses which dictate the norms of behaviour and action, as appropriate for one's gender in a given context. I feel it is important to briefly outline the philosophy of social constructionism here, though this will be much more thoroughly addressed in

the following chapter where the methodological approach to this study will be explained in detail.

Berger and Luckmann (1966) in their book 'The Social Construction of Reality' describe how social constructionists explore 'the ways social phenomena are created, institutionalised, and made into tradition by humans' (Sanger and Wales, 2001). From this perspective 'socially constructed reality is seen as an on-going dynamic process; reality is re-produced by people acting on their interpretation and their knowledge of it' (Sanger and Wales, 2001). Sanger and Wales (2001) discuss how 'social construction describes subjective, rather than objective reality - that is, reality as we can perceive it rather than reality as it is, separate from our perceptions'.

Burr (1995), who describes herself as a critical advocate of the social constructionist movement, concedes that there is no single definition which adequately describes social constructionism. She instead proposes that writings from this perspective share the following four dimensions (p3-5), or what Cohen et al (2004, p410) call 'the 4 tenets of social constructionism':

1. *'A critical stance towards taken-for-granted knowledge'*

Social constructionists would challenge what we view as orthodox or traditional values, questioning why the world is structured in the way it is. And, of most relevance here, they reject essentialist notions of identity (discussed earlier in this chapter).

2. *'Historical and Cultural Specificity'*

Burr (1995) claims that 'the ways in which we commonly understand the world, the categories and concepts we use, are historically and culturally specific' (p3), therefore what is deemed 'natural' in one place and time is not necessarily so entrenched in other contexts. She further proposes that we are quick to privilege certain ways of being over those which are culturally alien to us.

3. *'Knowledge is sustained by social processes'*

Burr suggests that 'it is through the daily interactions between people in the course of social life that our versions of knowledge become fabricated' (p4) rather than through observation of a natural objective world.

4. *'Knowledge and social action go together'*

Burr suggests that the way we understand the world formulates the actions we take. Therefore, often an action can be understood in the context of a person's worldview. She also suggests that language is an important social action, and so a person's self-narrative is a crucial starting point to expose the core beliefs that people draw upon to construct and present themselves.

Social constructionism is therefore appealing to me, as a critical thinker, as it promises to remove the notion of 'an ultimate truth' and open up liberating potential for people to construct new 'selves' and ways of being.

To conclude this section on the nature of identity I wish to clarify the terms that I shall employ in this study. This is particularly important as in popular usage one might interchange terms such as 'identity' and 'role', yet in the context of an academic discussion it is essential that this distinction is made clear. I follow Giddens' (1991, p244) definition of identity as 'the self as reflexively understood by the individual'. More specifically I adopt a critical approach and follow Dick and Hyde's (2006, p549) suggestion that identity refers to 'the individual's self-understanding as constituted through the regulatory effects of power/knowledge relations'. So whilst one might explore a person's identity at the level of interaction with the individual (for example through a research interview) it is not unconnected to broader social discourses which it might be informed by, and which in turn it might inform: 'the self is not a passive entity, determined by external influences; in forging their self identities, no matter how local their specific contexts of action, individuals contribute to and directly promote social influences that are global in their consequences and implications' (Giddens, 1991, p2).

Roles, as 'structuring structures' (Bourdieu, 1979)², discourses in themselves, set limits on the discursive resources upon which individuals can credibly draw to construct an identity. Roles, as I have already described with reference to Goffman, reflect the different domains and institutions that a person will encounter in their lives. In the domain of the home, a person might embody the role of parent and in the domain of paid work, might undertake a professional role. It is the way in which a person performs this role, through negotiation of the various discourses available (for example of how to be a 'good mother') that is the focus of the present study. As Giddens' comments 'the self, like the broader institutional contexts in which it exists, has to be reflexively made. Yet this task has to be accomplished amid a puzzling diversity of options and possibilities' (1991, p3). I see home-based telework as a unique and challenging context which is likely to add to this puzzlement but might also open up new options and possibilities for the individuals concerned. As reflected in the research questions I have set, I am particularly interested in the work that this might necessitate and the rewards and costs that this might entail.

Gender Issues

In recent decades, as Kanter (1977) remarks, many people thought of organisations as 'sex neutral machines', which is perhaps why gender was a somewhat side-lined area of study until relatively recently in the organisational behaviour field (Alvesson and Billing, 1997), but now, as Tietze et al (2003, p109) comment, there is 'a rich and diverse literature on gender relations in organisations'. A wealth of literature exploring issues of gender and work has emerged and some of the more heavily focused upon topics include the patriarchal nature of organisational culture (eg. Cartwright and Gale, 1995); women in management (eg. Davidson and Burke, 2000); vertical and horizontal gender segregation (eg. Walby, 1988), and women's struggles to forge legitimate professional identities (as seen in Dick and Hyde, 2006). Despite this upsurge in interest, there are some significant areas which have been underdeveloped or, in some cases, issues remain which have been entirely ignored by organisation studies. Parenting, for example, is an overlooked area

² Thanks to Penny Dick for guiding me to this useful reference

of research, and its direct impact upon working lives is rarely acknowledged. In particular the role of the father has largely been left unexamined by organisational theorists (see Halford, 2006 for a rare exception).

Through reviewing the gender literature I find that much research which discusses gender, seems to only address the female experience; as Morgan (1996, p9) comments "gender' has tended to be a code word for 'women'". For example, Wilson and Greenhill (2004) promise to 'call in to question traditional sureties' (p207) yet they choose to only examine women's 'fractured identities' and thus continue the tradition of discussing gender roles in the home and family with an almost total exclusion of the male perspective. They therefore perpetuate, rather than dissolve, one of the barriers they are seeking to challenge. In addition to this, as Fincham and Rhodes (1994) reveal, 'women's experiences in the labour market have been ignored or labelled with simple stereotypes until quite recently' (p289). These stereotypes include the universalising of the female experience of work, with the major 'problem' for women often articulated as 'combining the long-term pursuit of a career with care of a family' (Fincham and Rhodes, 2004, p305). This reinforces the idea that the responsibility for childcare still falls largely with women, but also makes the dangerous generalisation that all women are, or are seeking to be, mothers. In this project, instead of using the term 'woman' and meaning 'mother', I overtly aim to focus on parenthood, and upon how the parental role is experienced by both men and women. This is because I have sympathy with Bernardes' (1997, p187) assertion that 'the single clearest inequality between the genders in contemporary society relates to parenting'.

I consider here how gender can be researched: from more traditional perspectives, to those which take a somewhat less mainstream approach, such as feminism and social constructionism (though I acknowledge that feminism can be seen almost as a 'mainstream' approach within gender studies and social constructionism is gaining momentum in this field in particular). I also explore a growing literature labelled 'masculinities' and examine current levels of gender equality (or, to be more accurate, inequality) in employment, before moving on to the literature around the issue of parenthood. I propose that to discuss gender without giving some attention to parenting, and parenting

without addressing issues of gender is a very partial view. The section boundaries therefore are less rigid than they have been constructed here; these issues overlap considerably. For example, to explore issues of fatherhood without referring to the literature on masculinities is difficult. But I hope that what is presented here represents the key issues and the key paradigms, illuminating the topics of gender and parenting, and highlighting the closely woven nature of their interdependence.

Researching Gender: From Essentialism to Post- Feminism

A traditional view of gender is given the label the 'gender as a variable' perspective by Alvesson and Billing (1997) and is also referred to as 'feminist empiricism' by Harding (1986). It sees the categories of man and woman as unproblematic, and as legitimate and separate groups, which can be rationally and objectively measured, largely by quantitative methods. Whilst certainly positivist, these might also be termed essentialist views. Essentialism, with regards to gender, is the idea that a person contains within themselves essential qualities and that the experience of 'being male' or 'being female' is a collective experience shared by all members of that gender: men possess masculine traits and women are feminine. The main criticism of this perspective is around its oversimplification of the concept of gender. By proposing that it is an uncomplicated binary dichotomy, the room for diversity in gendered and sexual orientations, preferences, and lifestyle choices is denied or seen as deviant (Butler, 1990).

A differing stance to the biological view of gender described above is the belief in 'socialisation'. From this perspective the terms masculinity and femininity are part of the vocabulary of a particular view of gender which promotes the idea of 'sex roles' 'in which being a man or woman means enacting a general set of expectations which are attached to one's sex' (Connell, 1995, p22). In this conception masculinity and femininity are interpreted as internalised roles 'the products of social learning or 'socialisation''(ibid). This is still a rather deterministic view of gender, which suggests little hope for breaking with traditional ways of 'being men' and 'being women'. In this view inequalities are

likely to remain as the masculine and the feminine are assigned differing levels of prestige in the hierarchy of our society, where behaviours labelled as masculine are generally given more 'cultural capital' (Davies-Netzley, 1998). Indeed with all dualisms one is always privileged over the other (Knights, 1997).

Feminist approaches over all have the common aim of exposing inequality and improving the position of women. As Alvesson and Billing (1997, p21) state 'feminist theory critically addresses the subordination of women with the aim of seeking an end to it'. Alvesson and Billing (1997, p21) point out that 'gender studies are dominated by feminism', yet they also acknowledge that there is a diverse breadth of 'feminisms' which contribute to this field. Smithson and Stokoe (2005) explore the contrasting perspectives of what they call 'equality feminism' and 'difference feminism'. The former refers to the perspective that women are 'just like men' and should therefore receive the same treatment; and the latter stresses women's needs as different to those of men – though not solely due to biological determinism, as some have raised as their point of objection (Guerrina, 2001, in Smithson and Stokoe) - but because realistically they continue to fulfil the primary caregiver role; and therefore extra measures should be taken to ensure that they have access to equal outcomes. A further feminist approach, which might be labelled as 'radical' (Burrell and Morgan, 1979), seeks to entirely restructure society to end the subordination of women completely, by shaking up social roles. It should be noted that this and other feminist approaches might intersect with issues of capitalism, which Hartmann (in Walby, 1988) proposes, combines with the forces of patriarchy - 'a system of discourse that organises material and linguistic practices around a primary signifier which might be expressed as 'male authority'' (Holmer-Nadesan, 1996, p53) - to create a 'dual system' of oppression against women (though it is recognised that capitalism and patriarchy are not necessarily two distinct entities – rather both are part of the same fundamental ideology). This 'brand' of feminism is sometimes termed Marxist feminism, depending on the extent to which the author wishes to stress economic factors.

'Post-feminist' approaches question the stability of the categories of male and female, which tends to be taken for granted by essentialist perspectives. Post-feminism 'introduces a general scepticism as to universal understandings,

whereas differences and variations become central notions' (Alvesson and Billing, p39). The terms 'man' and 'woman' are not seen as existing independently or objectively but are seen as constituted and re-created through discourses and social relations, 'locking subjects into fixed identities' (Alvesson and Billing, p41). This perspective, which aligns with social constructionism, has been taken up by post-modern feminist and 'queer' theorists (so called due to their ironic and defiant reclamation of this term). Butler (1990, 1997), for example, argues that gender is socially constructed, and that the traits of masculinity and femininity are 'performed' not biologically innate, and further, that this charade is maintained through a process known as 'hegemony' which seeks to maintain the power imbalance between men and women in society. Hegemony refers to Gramsci's notion that 'people are not normally forced to concede power or control to another group or groups; rather they are convinced that their best interests will be served by that group being in power, or that one group is naturally superior' (1986 in Tietze et al, 2003, p148). For women this is evident in the reified notion that motherhood is sacred and should be of central importance to their lives, particularly above professional endeavours. Whether telework, which brings paid work into the home for both women and men, might impact upon this assumption, is a key question of this study.

Masculinity and 'Masculinities'

Before turning my discussions of gender towards the topic of parenting, I feel attention should be paid to a burgeoning field of literature which focuses upon 'masculinities'. The masculinities literature forms not a consolidated paradigm, but rather seems to be a newly emerging umbrella term for research that wishes to promote the study of men. Until recently the term masculinity was more commonly associated with issues of violence, criminality, working class culture and a dangerous underclass (Collier and Collier, 1998), yet, largely thanks to the emergence of this field, attention is now being paid to men's identities in a broader sense, and, in most cases, with less negative connotations. Connell (1995) comments that the idea of a 'true' or singular masculinity is obsolete and was one of the first to call for the pluralisation of the term, paving the way for the genre of 'masculinities' as a legitimate topic for sociological study. The former

term 'implies a false unity in men's lives' (Connell, 1995, p3) whereas the latter, he suggests, demonstrates an acknowledgement of masculinity as fluid and multiple – echoing equivalent claims by post-feminists about the nature of gender.

Connell (1995) distinguishes between books which fit into the genre of masculinities, in the sense in which he coined the phrase above, and books which were the forerunners to this, which he oppositionally calls 'books about men'. One of these 'books about men' is Bly's iconic 'Iron John' (1990), in which Bly drew upon the work of analytical psychologist Carl Jung, to expose male archetypes which might be seen in modern society. He did this by comparing the 'types' of manhood he saw around him to characters in a German fairy tale, to expose flaws in modern male development, which he warned were eroding the production of strong masculine (male) identities. Many, particularly in the USA, heralded this book as the start of a 'men's movement' which sought to reinstate traditional masculine values into boys lives. Ironically, whilst Bly had originally called for men to respect feminist values, this movement became seen as a direct backlash to feminism – as men 'reclaimed' traditional masculine pursuits women were, by matter of course, excluded from these. Furthermore, due to the book's core theme: that men and women are fundamentally different, Bly was accused of essentialism and biological determinism.

In much the same ilk as Bly, Moir and Moir (1998) describe four key elements which make up the archetype of the 'new man': 'the new man should take an equal share in parenting' (p242); 'the new man should do his full share of housework' (p245); 'the new man should be in touch with his emotions' (p255); and 'the new man is every bit as good a parent as a mother' (p268). With quick reference to the popular media, this seems to accurately sum up the idea of what a 'new man' is, or should be, yet Moir and Moir's book draws upon a range of quasi-scientific studies to passionately argue that biological differences alone prevent men from becoming, in their words, 'like women'. The positivist perspective of this book is evident in the frequent use of terms such as 'truth', 'proof', 'fact' and 'evidence', which seem to be an attempt to persuade the reader that the disparity in men and women's status in society is solely due to men's 'biological advantages' (p189). Since the late 20th century though, books

have also appeared which acknowledge that masculinity refers to a socially constructed idea, rather than innate and essential qualities that all men (and men alone) possess.

Hearn and Morgan (1990, p8-9) discuss that 'the need to theorise gender, in particular to theorise men and masculinity, arises largely because of the dangers of reification, essentialism, and reductionism that arise when using such categories as 'women' and 'men', 'femininity' and 'masculinity''. They also point out that 'just as feminist scholarship has demonstrated that 'woman', 'women' and 'femininity' are social and historically constructed, and thus problematic, so too has it demonstrated the problematic nature of 'man', 'men', and 'masculinity' (1990, p4). And so, somewhat ironically, it is from feminism that the critical field of study now known as masculinities was spawned.

Lupton and Barclay (1997, p2) reflect upon the role of men in society, how they are still today expected to act as the provider for their families and 'are encouraged to construct their self-identities as masculine subjects through their work role'. Whilst, in recent years, much consideration has been given to how men's identities can be constructed through career, which Grey (1994) classically described as 'a project of the self', less attention has been paid to men's self actualisation through their role as fathers - even masculinities writers have been slow to redress this balance. A review of the organisational behaviour literature reveals that this field has also been slow to move away from more comfortable and familiar ways of talking about men and women.

I now turn to examine the current 'climate' of gender equality in the UK context, to provide the reader with a brief overview of the status quo of men's and women's positions in society today, particularly with regards to employment, before examining the literature on the topic of parental identities.

A Snapshot of Gender Equality in the UK

Following a review of statistical evidence available from the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC, 2006), the body which monitors gender equality in the UK,

three key areas of difference emerge in male and female employment situations:

Figures suggest that there is a difference in the type of work that men and women perform:

- Men hold three-fifths of all professional jobs in the UK (EOC, 2006)
- Three-quarters of top civil service jobs are held by men (EOC, 2006)
- '98% of apprentices in construction, the motor industry and plumbing are men' (EOC, 2006)
- Women account for almost 80% of all health and social care workers (EOC, 2006)

A gap in the amount men and women are paid is evident:

- 'Women earn on average 17% per hour less than men for full time work' (EOC, 2006)
- Part time women workers earn on average 38.4% less than full time male workers (EOC, 2006)
- In banking, insurance and pension provision roles men earn 41% more than women (EOC, 2006) – this employment sector has the largest gender pay gap

Parenting has an impact on employment patterns for women which is not evident for men:

- Mothers are more likely than fathers to adopt flexible forms of work (including part time hours, job shares and term-time working) (EOC, 2006)

- 57% of women and 23% of men engage in some form of flexible work (EOC, 2006)
- 55% of mothers with children under 5 years old are now in employment as opposed to 28% in 1975 (EOC, 2006)

Presenting statistical data might initially seem to concur with empiricist ways of viewing gender and I would propose that these figures should be viewed with some caution, as they do not take into account the diversity held within the categories of 'men' and 'women' (eg. in terms of race, disability, and educational status). If, however, viewed simply as a starting point, they seem to suggest differences in the ways in which men and women function in the labour market, with an even more marked difference apparent in the ways in which mothers and fathers experience paid employment. The following section examines, in richer qualitative detail, contrasting images of motherhood and fatherhood.

Parental Identities

According to Arendell (1997, p1) 'parenting is an umbrella term that encompasses the array of activities and skills performed by adults who provide child rearing and child care giving'. He also reminds us that 'parenting is situated in place and time; it does not occur in a social vacuum' (Arendell, 1997, p4). A major feature of the contextual landscape in which discussions of parenting take place, is the social institution known as 'the family'. According to Alvesson and Billing (1997, p95) many social positions are 'loaded with gender symbolism', and they comment that nowhere is this more evident than in the domain of family life.

Bernardes (1997), a notable critical theorist on the subject of the family, rejects traditional models of the family and instead argues that 'we should listen to what children, adolescents, husbands and wives, mothers and fathers tell us about their experiences' (pii). He explains that we have an ideological notion of family despite 'enormous real world variation and diversity' (p2) as evidence to the

contrary. He describes the popular image of the family often portrayed in the British media, as 'a young, similarly aged, white, married heterosexual couple with a small number of healthy children living in an adequate home' (p3). He continues to illustrate that in this idealised notion of family there is 'a clear division of responsibilities... the male is primarily the full time breadwinner and the female primarily the caregiver' (p3), this he describes as quite simply unrealistic claiming that it 'omits the rich detail of everyday living' (p3).

Morgan (1996, p78-9) claims that 'feminist and critical studies of family life have, cumulatively, developed a coherent and complex picture of the various ways in which family relationships and values construct or obscure gender'. Less heralded though, according to Morgan (1996, p79) are 'the ways in which family relationships may themselves become a source of change within the wider gender order' – a niche that my thesis seeks to address. Family life, Morgan (1996, p94) proposes, 'may become a back stage where participants are aware of both the public and private faces of gender. Yet family life may also be another stage where gender performances take place'. The social constructionist perspective suggests that we are all constrained - to some degree - to perform the roles that society has deemed appropriate for us (Burr, 1995); and currently this means that women are more commonly seen as parents and men as workers (Lorber and Farrell, 1991). This is reflected in popular ideas and images, and below women and men's identities as parents are considered with reference to existing literature.

Images of motherhood

It is increasingly being claimed, in the literature, that the reality of the everyday lived experience of motherhood is at odds with 'idealized' images of motherhood, even though these remain dominant in the popular imagination and indeed the media. Dally (1982, p93) explains that the construction of the mother figure 'is full of fantasy with moral and religious overtones' and increasingly entails political suggestion. She cites the end of World War II as a pivotal time in the construction of this ideal. The government of the time, she claims, promoted the romanticism of home-making for women because men

were frustrated when they returned from war to find that women had competently replaced them in their jobs: 'women had to be put back in their place. One of the most effective ways of achieving this was to idealise that place' (p96). Furthermore a myth of the 'naturalness' of motherhood (Richardson, 1993 in Bernardes, 1997) became ingrained as a means to repopulate the country, leading to the 'baby boom' of the post war period.

Kitzinger (1978, p226) comments on the paradox which exists across cultures, which classes women as 'dangerous, mysterious and unclean things' but also, as mothers, as 'the most revered'. This ideal, though, being based on illusion, can easily lead to disillusionment where women find it hard to live up to this model of perfection in an unjust and changing social climate. As Kitzinger (1978, p227) concludes 'women as mothers have been put on an altar for so long and in so many different cultures that there is a tremendous gulf between men's and their own perception of 'the ideal mother' and the real women who try to live up to this impossible ideal'. Kofodimos (1993 in Caproni 2004 p214) echoes this in her description of an 'idealised image':

'a picture of a type of person that we want to be and feel we should be... this image always incorporates a set of 'shoulds': who we should be; how we should be; how we should feel; and what we should want. Furthermore we seek to live up to this image, and our self-esteem depends on how closely we feel we are living up to it. The problem with this dynamic is that the idealized image does not match the range of dimensions of our real selves'

Some feminist writers have recorded their own feelings of frustration and disillusionment with this role. Betty Friedan (1965, p15) famously labelled this 'the problem that has no name' and highlighted that it stirs up a crisis of identity for women. At the time that Friedan wrote she observed that 'the feminine mystique permits, even encourages, women to ignore the question of their identity. The mystique says they can answer the question 'who am I?' by saying 'Tom's wife... Mary's mother'' (p71). Thus a relational identity as the supportive 'other' to their husbands and children seemed to be the most that women at that time could hope for to legitimate themselves. Rich (1976) proposes that 'motherhood as an institution has ghettoised and degraded female potentialities'

especially through the 'dangerous schism between public and private life' (p13). The early seeds of discontent over women's identities solely as wives and mothers, brought to the fore by first wave feminists, led to a revolution known as the women's movement, and, in large part, led to social changes which saw women's employment increase (the development of the contraceptive pill, legal rights to abortion, and changes to employment legislation were also crucial). This gave women a chance to forge professional identities outside of the home (it is ironic then that home-based work – a return to the home for thousands of women - is not seen universally as a retrogressive step in terms of achieving gender equality). It should also be noted that, especially in these early days, women's new professional identities were not intended to replace her mothering role, but she was expected to juggle work around her primary roles of wife and mother -this leads to the question of just how much has changed in recent times.

Many writers have commented on the complex nature of motherhood, claiming that this role is not simply a biological status but also covers a range of activities, from the practical to the relational and emotional. As Boulton (1983 in Bernardes, 1997, p167) remarks motherhood is characterised as 'responsibility without bounds'. According to Morgan (1996) much family work revolves around the notion of 'care'; as he points out, the terms 'family' and 'care' are 'frequently and effortlessly bracketed together' (p99). Yet, he argues, 'care' is clearly a gendered term: 'the identities of women and gender are constructed and shaped within the caring process' (p111).

In the 1980s there was a peak of publication on the topic of motherhood, largely from a feminist perspective, but the 1990s saw the development of a body of knowledge which became known as 'family studies', which, together with the growth of the masculinities literature, saw motherhood drop out of vogue somewhat as a topic for research in its own right. Yet, even despite changing legislation and organisational policy, current statistics (see the previous section) paint a picture of mothers (and women more generally) still struggling with the same issues they were facing last century – lower pay, employment restricted to certain levels and occupations, and a continuing assumption that they will fulfil the role of primary carer (and will desire to do so).

In contemporary society Reskin and Padavic (1994, p147) claim that 'most married women now share responsibility for the breadwinner role' but Wilson (1995, p5) points out that 'a woman's domestic identity still constitutes her as a disadvantaged worker'. Alvesson and Billing (1997) hinted a decade ago that things might slowly be changing for women. Below they provide an interesting account of the nature of women's identities in contemporary society; and, whilst it reveals that change seems to be afoot, the discourses of domesticity and motherhood in particular remain strong:

'Domesticity and sexuality as images of women still exist and facilitate some self understandings and behaviours and make others, including those that facilitate careers, less viable. But in large sectors of contemporary society they do not dominate any longer. The modern, professional, career-orientated woman is certainly a legitimate social identity – although potentially a problematic one for women to adopt if it breaks too strongly with traditional ideas of femininities associated with sexual attractiveness and family orientation.' (p98)

Hochschild (2005) also hints at a newly emerging form of motherhood, which has seen the role of the mother 'corporatised'. Firstly she talks about 'the commercialisation of intimate life' (p76), where (even outside of teleworking contexts) the boundaries between market and non-market life are eroding. And, just as theorists have recently brought to our attention images of organisations as arenas of human emotion (Fineman, 1993), she argues, motherhood can now be seen to be constructed using corporate values, ideas and language. Secondly she highlights a widespread 'culture of outsourcing' (p77), and argues that this increasingly involves so called 'care professionals' commodifying and charging for the 'services' traditionally provided by mothers.

Images of fatherhood

Ribbens (1994 in Bernardes, 1997, p167) observes the 'centrality of childrearing for the identities of women', yet there is very little evidence in the literature of an

attempt to discover how fatherhood affects the ongoing formation of men's identities, both at home and at work. Moorehouse (1993 in Cowan et al) reveals a trend of examining mother's employment as a 'social problem' which often concludes that a child's development is adversely affected by the absence of their mother, yet I have not found similar examples of father's employment being described in such terms. It also seems that 'employers have organised work based on the presumption that workers are men who have few, if any, outside demands on their time' (Reskin and Padavic, 1994, p176). Reskin and Padavic (1994, p147) claim that 'men, by and large, have been slower to share domestic responsibilities' including parenting and, in the home, according to Moorehouse's review of qualitative data associated with parental practices (1993 in Cowan et al, p273) 'men feel that they are *helping* their employed wives by doing housework or by "baby-sitting" their own children', rather than considering themselves domestic beings or parents in their own right.

Reskin and Padavic (1994, p154) argue that 'the conflicts that men experience between their work and family roles differ greatly from those women face'. They claim that 'men's primary work / family problems occur when they are unable to perform the breadwinner role, are discontented with the role's limits, or view their wives as competitors for the role' (p154). One element of this discontentment with their traditional role is that 'some men feel the disconnection that arises between themselves and their children when work requires that they sacrifice time with their families' (p155) As Halford (2006, p386) points out 'for employed fathers, the good father is a largely absent father'. Gerson's passage below offers a useful illustration of a man's traditional parental role:

'Not long ago, the term father conveyed a clear and unambiguous meaning. A 'good father' worked hard, provided his children with an economically secure home, and offered committed but distant guidance. Although he relied on a nurturing woman to meet his children's daily needs for emotional and physical sustenance, he compensated for his aloofness by winning the bread that mothers baked' (Gerson in Arendell 1997, p119).

Instead of debating whether or not this ideal ever existed, a focus upon its pervading and mythical qualities, and how these contribute to our idea of fatherhood, is most pertinent here. Gerson points out another idea which may inform men's ideas of parenting: 'our literary tradition is replete with male cultural 'heroes'... who earn and maintain their manhoods by escaping the bonds of domesticity and the responsibilities of fatherhood' (p132-33 in Arendell, 1997). She conducted research which she suggests shows that men adopt one of three different strategies towards fathering:

Paths toward breadwinning – choosing a traditional 'provider' role, by pursuing secure paid employment, whilst his domestic and childcare needs are performed by a woman.

Paths toward autonomy – these men sought freedom by pursuing more personally rewarding but often less secure work, generally resulting in an emotional and sometimes economic distance from their children.

Paths toward involved fatherhood – these men sought to prioritise their fathering roles, in a nurturing and involved manner, which Gerson comments, is hard to distinguish from mothering. For these men careers become 'just jobs'.

The first category seems to fit with Gerson's initial quote about traditional ideas of being a 'good father', and the second, with her quote about men 'escaping the bonds' of fatherhood. The third category represents a situation where men do not shirk parental responsibilities and become more involved fathers.

According to Gerson, more and more men would like to follow this pathway, yet they face many struggles, particularly in accessing flexible working opportunities to facilitate their desired lifestyle. Kimmel (1993, p1) agrees that 'a new kind of man has emerged, one who wants to be a more involved father' BUT he qualifies this – 'with no loss of income, prestige, and corporate support – and no diminished sense of 'manhood''.

So there is some suggestion, in the literature presented, that traditional discourses of motherhood and fatherhood are still dominant and might still be informing men and women how to construct their parental identities as

appropriate for their gender. Though it also seems that alternative identities are beginning to emerge, which might be accessible to those women who want to be fully accepted when engaging in paid employment and those men who wish to become more active and caring parents, difficult though these paths may be. This raises the question of whether flexible working options such as telework might facilitate or even provoke change in the ways in which men and women behave and present themselves as parents.

The changing meanings of Career

I move now from the topic of gendered parental identities to examining the changing meanings of the term career, leading to consideration of the 'professional' elements of identity construction, and indeed how these might also be gendered.

It is often reported that the world of work is currently undergoing radical and rapid change, the likes of which have never been seen before. Grey (2005) comments that this taken-for-granted notion is present in the introductory chapters of virtually every business-related text available. Forces of globalisation, increasing competition, and major advances in technology are frequently cited as the key drivers of this 'revolution' - though the extent to which technology is in fact a driver and whether or not changes to organisations really do indeed constitute a 'revolution' were discussed earlier in this chapter. In this section I consider the impact of changes to the world of work and organisations (whatever the scale and cause of these might be) upon conceptualisations and understandings of career, providing perspectives which might be labelled 'old' and 'new', along with more critical ideas which challenge the very validity of this dichotomy. Social constructionist views on career are fore-fronted, which lead to a discussion about how we might research people's (diverse and dynamic) attachments to their careers by employing techniques to capture people's career narratives, and uncover the discourses drawn upon to create these. Running throughout this section is the assumption that 'identity is obviously an important concept in career theory' (Bujold, 2004, p472). Grey (1994, p479) clearly agrees, suggesting that 'career can offer one of the most

obvious sites for realising the project of the self' and 'in some cases 'the project of the self and career become interchangeable'.

Traditional Meanings of Career

Wilensky (1961 cited in Cohen, 2001, p267) describes career in structural terms: 'a career is a succession of related jobs arranged in a hierarchy of prestige, through which persons move in an ordered, (more or less predictable) sequence'. Watts (1998, p1) similarly proposes that 'the traditional concept of career has been concerned with progression up an ordered hierarchy within an organisation or profession... it is an essentially bureaucratic conception: neat and orderly'. These rational definitions are criticised for 'failing to take into account all the complexity of career behaviour' (Bujold, 2004, p470), and more generally, as Cohen (2001, p264) points out, 'mainstream career theory has been widely criticised for its failure to account for the diverse ways in which people construct their careers'.

O'Doherty and Roberts (in Collin and Young, 2000) also criticise traditional career theory, by suggesting that it is too grounded in positivism and humanism. They cite five 'humanist anchors' (they also call these 'gold standards' or 'fool's gold'), which, they believe, are currently causing the stagnation of career theory (p149 - 154). These are:

'true self' – the idea that there is an essential and true identity within us all, and that corporate culture, through the discourse of career, can help us to find salvation and realise this inner being

'meaning' – the idea that a sense of meaning can be given to one's life solely through the ideologies of work and career

'progress' – the idea that personal fulfilment can be achieved by constant innovation and ambitiously striving toward a projected future

'order' – the idea that individuals can arrange their lives, and therefore their careers, into some coherent and significant order, the true meaning of which is there to be discovered

'position' – the idea that we can be located unambiguously into secure and comprehensible positions, through titles, such as our occupation, which allow others to know what kind of people we are

These pillars, O'Doherty and Roberts (in Collin and Young, 2000) feel, are unhelpful in post-modern times, which they claim are 'characterised by uncertainty, flux, and struggle' (p149), and they call for more radical, critical and particularly constructionist research on careers. Cohen et al (2004) agree that 'there is still a tendency towards positivistic approaches in career theory' (p408) and point out that this has resulted in 'the persistence of unhelpful divisions: the individual or the organisation; career as subjective experience or objective phenomenon; and now, [they] argue, the old or the new' (p409).

The idea that there may now be 'new' careers emerging, will be explored further in the following section, but even as many theorists are hailing such a revolution, El Sawad (2003) identifies 'a number of problems which continue to dog the careers literature': firstly she proposes that 'career studies to date have pursued an uncritical and apolitical agenda', which 'presents career actors as free agents able to shape their own career destinies'. She also criticises the careers literature for 'presenting gender neutral accounts of career'. This view is echoed by Hopfl and Hornby Atkinson (in Collin and Young, 2000, p130) who argue that 'the notion of career 'success' is traditionally defined in what are male terms'. El Sawad (2003) proposes that 'the focus to date has been on the objective rather than subjective dimensions of career experiences', the result of this, she argues, is that 'we therefore have limited knowledge of how individuals make sense of their own career experiences, not least those relating to the impact of career on family life, of family life on career and of the effect (if any) of existing family-friendly policies' And finally, she argues that 'careers do not occur in a vacuum and yet many career studies to date have been conducted as though they do, leading consequently to a neglect of the context in which both careers and family life are played out'. El Sawad (2003) concludes by recommending that more qualitative and multi-disciplinary research be conducted, which is less ethnocentric, and which does not ignore the 'hidden from view' context (Ackers, 2002) of people's lifestyles and family lives.

Watts (1998) argues that traditional ways of describing career are 'not without virtue' (p1) as they provide order and 'permit individual choice, particularly in choosing the particular ladder which the individual seeks to climb' (p2). He also acknowledges that our education systems, and many career guidance systems, are still based on these traditional conceptions, yet he remarks that this is now becoming a fragmented model which 'less and less describes the real world' (p2). Despite some theorists heralding the end of the notion of career, Watts himself proposes the metaphor of a 'career-quake' (1996) to describe the monumental changes to the world of work and its impact upon traditional understandings and experiences of career. Further, more profound, metaphors have also been used, for example of death and transfiguration (Collin and Watts, 1996). Collin has also applied Bakhtin's (1981) literary genres of the 'epic' and the 'novel' to describe the changing nature of career: 'whereas, during most of the twentieth century, career has been like the traditional epic, it is now becoming more like the (nineteenth century) novel' (p163 in Collin and Young, 2000). The following section draws out further, the features associated with the 'new' career.

'New' Definitions and Ways of Exploring Career

It has been remarked that changes to the world of work have caused a need to re-examine the core concepts of career theory (see Savikas, 2000). In an attempt to meet this need, Collin and Young (2000) have brought together a collection of writings in an attempt to present 'a kaleidoscopic view of the concept of career, reviewing its past and considering its future' (p i). Their conclusion following this review is that 'the meaning of the construct of career will change, but will have continuing value' (p277). They highlight a need to 'reframe our understanding of career', in the light of changes to the world of work, and stress that 'we need to recognise that career has a wider scope than we have previously seen, and that it is not only ambiguous, but also ambivalent' (p294).

Watts proposes 'we need to re-define [career] as the individual's lifelong progression in learning and in work' (1998, p2). He is not adverse to new

approaches to exploring career: 'constructivist approaches focus on helping individuals to be authors of their career narratives: to tell the story so far; to shape the themes and tensions in the storyline; and to start drafting the next chapter' (1998, p5). Young and Collin (2004, p373) propose that new approaches 'problematize traditional understandings of career. They raise opportunities to question fundamental assumptions'; in this sense they can be seen as critical, even radical, and potentially emancipatory.

Cohen et al (2004, p408) state that 'the old, stultifying world of traditional, hierarchical careers is said to have given way to a more liberating and all-embracing career world based on the accumulation of skills and knowledge' and, of particular relevance to my research, is now based on 'the integration of personal and professional life'. But Cohen et al (2004) claim that this 'old versus new' dichotomy is brought in to doubt as 'social constructionism illuminates aspects of career that are obscured by more positivistic approaches' (p408), allowing us to 'adequately capture the analytical richness of the career concept' (p409). Indeed, they conclude, 'from a social constructionist's gaze, the 'old' and 'new' might not look quite so different after all' (p420).

Social Constructionism and Career

Young and Collin (2004, p384) discuss that 'social constructionism... comes at the field [of Vocational Behaviour] from a new perspective, and poses considerable challenges to some of its key constructs: self, agency, and choice'. They discuss that there has been a variety of responses from theorists to the growing popularity of this approach, these can be summarised as:

- 'to attempt to assimilate these new perspectives and widen the basis of the mainstream theories'
- 'to wrestle with social constructionism itself, developing it in new directions'
- 'to take the opportunity it offers to provide a framework in which the traditional canons of career could be examined'

(Young and Collin, 2004, p384)

The paradigm of social constructionism, they conclude, shows potential through 'not only enriching the traditional canon of career by widening and deepening it' but also 'to re-frame the canon itself, as our adoption of 'discourses' to represent the field exemplifies' (Young and Collin, 2004, p384).

Cohen et al (2004) conclude that 'social constructionism can further our understanding of careers' (p413) and that the contribution made by this approach falls into 3 broad areas:

- 'It enables us to transcend the theoretical reductionism which in many cases has limited the depth and breadth of career research'
- 'It facilitates more contextually embedded analyses'
- 'It leads to an emphasis on issues of power and legitimacy in career thinking and action'

(p413)

In the field of vocational or organisational behaviour social constructionist approaches are brought to life in practical research contexts through the critical examination of the discourses which people use as the building blocks to create narratives about themselves and their careers.

Collin and Young (2000, p2) propose that 'it is through interpretation and subsequent construction of narratives and stories that individuals make sense of their career and world'. Cohen et al (2004, p411) suggest that this 'idea of careers as continuous narratives, merging past and present, is central to new definitions of career'. They see the 'generation of career narratives as a social process, framed by cultural norms and understandings' (p411) to produce 'socially legitimate career scripts' (p412) and because 'narrative can be seen as a form of self construction' (Bujold, 2004, p474) identity as a whole can be seen as bounded by the rules of cultural and social legitimacy. This legitimacy is maintained, social constructionists would suggest, by drawing upon dominant discourses, which may limit an individual's scope for forging unique and original lives. Young and Collin (2004, p379) remark that discourses 'reflect the way we talk, think, and act about career' and conclude that 'discourses are not single, unitary or bounded perspectives, but fairly fluid frames, that enable us to hold

particular thoughts, discussion, and action together in a way that is meaningful for a particular purpose at a particular time' (ibid).

Metaphors are key features of discourses - see for example the notion of breadwinning and baking presented in the previous section with respect to parenting (Gerson in Arendell, 1997). Herriot (1992, p1) suggests that 'there is a whole set of career metaphors which actively conceal the essence of the idea of career'. According to Grant and Oswick (1996 in Cohen, 2001, p264) 'metaphors are used to make sense of the situations we find ourselves in' and can be 'a way of thinking and a way of seeing', and Morgan (1986) adds: a basis for action. They can also be readily drawn upon in our career narratives as a way of trying to make sense of our lives, and in presenting and explaining our selves and experiences to others.

Herriot (1992) proposes that there are three dominant metaphorical ideas about career, which are broadly available in contemporary society:

- 'First, the career idea is about time. It looks at the present in the light both of the past, as the individual and the organisation have experienced it, and also of the projected future. Because it has this dynamic quality, it makes sense of change. It enables us to understand why we are where we are now in the light of where we've been before; but it also points up the magnitude of the jump to where we might have to get' (p3)
- Secondly 'organisational careers are relationships over time between individuals and their organisations' (p3)
- 'The third and last feature of the career concept is the distinction between internal and external, or subjective and objective careers' (p5)

More specific metaphors have also been used to compliment our definition of career, for example in terms of the career journey; paths to follow; ladders to climb; tracks; arrows; and in terms of a 'rat race'; featuring ceilings; pinnacles; and targets. How these are weaved into the narratives of my participants will highlight their own understandings of, and attachments to, the notion of career.

Tietze and Musson (2003), however, sound a note of caution, warning that we should view such metaphors with a critical eye. Their own research found that talk about career is imbued with notions which reinforce the hegemony of capitalist production, particularly through the idea that 'time is money' (Thompson, 1967).

Professional Identities

Research on professional identities has traditionally been restricted to occupations considered to belong to 'the professions' of medicine (eg. Allsop and Mulcahy, 1998); accountancy (eg. Beard, 1994); and the law (Mather et al, 2001) for example, but, as Fournier's (1999) work has highlighted, there has been a 'casual generalisation of the notion of professionalism' (p281), with 'the notion of professionalism creeping up in unexpected domains' (p280). Indeed recent research has increasingly explored job roles which would once have been considered to be on the peripheries of what might traditionally have been termed a professional career, either due to their largely feminine nature eg. nursing (Hallam, 2000) and teaching (Sachs, 2001); or because changing ways of working have unsettled previously secure white collar industries eg. IT work (Walsham, 1998). It is important to point out here that my usage of the term 'professional identity' is broader still, and refers more to the idea of the work-related facets of one's identity, rather than to the notion of 'professionalism' per se, though, as my sample is composed of those who identify themselves as professional workers, it is clear that this notion might well be important in their constructions of workplace identities.

How gender (McGowen and Hart, 1990); race (Bell and Nkomo, 2001) and age (Price, 2000) impact upon the pursuit of legitimate professional status has been examined, with a professional identity cited as something to be claimed or 'reclaimed' (Tschudin, 1999). It is increasingly being seen as something which is 'constructed' (Bowers, 1997), and performed in the context of struggles for power. Holmes et al (1999), for example, talk about 'doing power', and Roberts (2000, p71) discusses professional identity as a means to 'liberate oneself from the oppressor within'.

In terms of gender (perhaps the most relevant issue of this literature for my research) Halford (2006, p386) draws upon Coltrane's (2004) description of the ideal professional worker, as 'a man with a stay at home wife who fulfils his family obligations through being a breadwinner' thus stressing the gendered nature of professional identities. Collinson and Hearn (1996) similarly offer some critical perspectives on the frequent colloquial pairing of the terms 'men' and 'management', which reflects the reality that 'most managers in most organisations in most countries are men' (p1) (a fact still born out in the current statistics) but this is an issue which receives little remark or scrutiny from those who study management. Hugely influential management writers, whose texts are still to be found on Business Studies curricula, interchangeably use the terms 'manager' and 'he' (see Minzberg, 1973 for example).

Collinson and Hearn's (1996) collection built upon Kanter's (1977) text, which argued that the rational and efficient world of work is imbued with an inherently masculine ethic. She highlighted the assumption that only men have the qualities of tough mindedness; analytic reasoning; and, in particular, the ability to subordinate personal issues and family matters – skills supposedly crucial for performing the role of manager. This is also echoed in McDowell's (1997, p139) work, which proposed that that 'women as a group are out of place in the workplace, marked by their gender and their bodies as 'natural' and so as unsuitable participants in the rational, cerebral world of work' (see also Hassard et al, 2000 and Holliday et al, 2001 for perspectives on gendered embodiment and organisation). Acker proposes that in the professional world of work 'to be successful women have to become honorary men' (1990, in McDowell, 1997, p140), and thus embody some form of masculinity in order to progress. But McDowell describes how the male respondents in her study felt uneasy about women who tried to imitate a male stereotype, she concludes that attitudes and behaviour only go so far, what really matters is embodiment: 'what is valourised in patriarchy is not masculinity but **male** masculinity' (ibid, p156) (for an interesting discussion of **female** masculinity see Halberstam, 1998).

Work life balance and 'Family friendly' careers

In the year 2000 the British labour government launched a work life balance campaign, specifically focused towards promoting flexible employment practices to support working parents (Kodz et al, 2002). This led to a variety of changes to UK employment legislation (particularly through The Employment Act, 2002) through which the government urged workplaces to consider family life in their organisational practices and introduce policies that became known as 'family-friendly'. The campaign also featured the first national survey of work life balance issues (Hogarth et al, 2001), which went beyond a specific focus on family life, and found that 'many employers agreed with the view that people work best when they can strike a balance between work and the rest of their lives' (p14).

A 'long hours culture' (Kodz et al, 1998) was revealed and the toll that this was taking on Britain's workers, particularly in terms of stress related illnesses, became apparent, not to mention the cost to employers in terms of increased absenteeism and reduced productivity. The national survey (Hogarth et al, 2001) revealed that most employers saw the key benefit of work life balance policies as 'to help retain female employees' (p18). On top of this Hogarth et al (p20) cite 'equal opportunities policies, rising levels of female labour force participation, demographic trends, and skill shortages' as key drivers for the introduction of policies which attempt to accommodate family and working life. The EOC (Equal Opportunities Commission) also campaigns for work life balance, stressing both the business and social equity cases for the adoption of such policies. In orthodox management literature, not surprisingly, it is the business case which is nearly always fore-fronted: note this warning from Hobson et al (2001, p38): 'If corporate success in the next millennium depends on effective use of human resources, firms must aggressively embrace work/life balance programs and recognize that employees have major responsibilities outside of their jobs. Failure to do so will condemn a company to never-ending personnel problems that could jeopardize corporate survival'.

The national survey, based on data collected in 2000 (Hogarth et al, 2001), found that the most popular form of flexible working practice in the UK is part

time working: a quarter of the UK work force work part time (defined as less than 30 hours per week), though it is acknowledged that this is most common amongst the very youngest and oldest workers surveyed. Furthermore a huge discrepancy in terms of gendered usage was revealed: 44% of all female workers work part time but only 8% of male workers. The second most common form of flexible working is flexitime, which 24% of employees use, though these individuals predominantly work for larger organisations. All forms of flexible working practices reported were more commonly used by women with the sole exception of working from home, where it was reported that 24% of men, compared to 16% of women, work from home on at least an occasional basis. Of these people 80% classed themselves as managers or professional workers and the most frequently cited reasons for working from home were work-related as opposed to factors relating to care, the family, or leisure.

Research which focuses upon exploring issues of work life balance is currently in vogue, labelled by many as a 'hot topic' (Lewis et al, 2003), and critical perspectives are emerging. A typical way of viewing work life balance provision is within the context of a basic exchange relationship (Blau, 1964) between employees and employers: 'critical support provided by an employer can be expected to result in heightened efforts on the part of an employee to reciprocate or give back in some commensurate manner... this could be in the form of increased motivation, productivity, attendance, commitment, loyalty, and so forth' (Hobson et al, 2001, p38). Hence it could also be argued that this 'gift' is in fact a 'poisoned chalice' as employers expect something back from the employee in return for allowing them the opportunity to work flexibly.

Lewis et al (2003) claim that work life balance remains elusive, despite the uptake of flexible working practices, and they highlight concerns about the increasing invasiveness of paid work into people lives, which they claim is not only due to economic need but also due to the seduction of career as a way of offering self-identity and / or esteem (echoing Grey, 1994). Caproni (2004) argues that balance 'may not be an achievable or even a desirable goal' (p212). Drawing on her own experience as a working mother, she seeks to demonstrate a) 'how the work/life balance discourse reflects the individualism, achievement orientation, and instrumental rationality that is fundamental to modern

bureaucratic thought and action' (p208) and b) 'how such discourse may further entrench people in the work / life imbalance that they are trying to escape' (p208). Caproni (2004) urges a more critical examination of the discourse of work life balance and the assumptions held within it. She identifies a key problem with the discourse itself and particularly with the prescriptive nature of much of the literature on this topic: it encourages 'a systematic, goal-oriented approach to life' (p213) – this, she feels, seeks to rationalise and quantify our lives, removing passion and spontaneity, and creating a façade that we are entirely in control of our own destinies. She concludes that balance itself has become the goal and the beauty and serendipity of life is overlooked as the systematic and efficient pursuit of this goal becomes central to our lives.

Another sticking point is that, for the most part, these policies have been seen solely as devices to allow mothers the opportunity to juggle a career with their traditional childcare role, and rarely as a chance for men to become more active parents and play an increasingly prominent part in their children's lives - as Brannen et al (1994, pii) reflect 'mothers are more likely to be using 'flexible' or 'family friendly' practices than other women or men'. Furthermore Brannen et al (1994) reveal that traditionally in the workplace 'family responsibilities are regarded as a women's issue' (pii) and Kodz et al (2002, p70) reveal that a backlash may exist against mothers in organisations, who are seen as receiving 'special treatment' when singled out for flexible working options, especially when other workers are left 'carrying the can'. Brandth and Kvande (2001) explored 'Flexible Work and Flexible Fathers' in Norway. They concluded that even when policies exist to allow men a more active family role (their example concerned paternity leave), men were reluctant to participate for fear of being labelled uncommitted to their jobs by colleagues and employers.

Morgan (1996) discusses 'the abiding orthodoxy' of the separation of 'work' and 'home' issues as another downfall of research on this topic. Furthermore, it is proposed (El Sawad, 2005) that the almost exclusive focus upon 'family' when discussing home / work conflicts, marginalizes single people in particular, and those who do not live in what is conventionally described as a family household; this echoes Wood and Newton's (2006) work on childlessness. Family is seen as the key institution in life, outside of work, which competes for a person's time

(Hochschild, 2001), and it is the zealous way in which this construction is so privileged in our talk, practice, and policy, which is so appealing to me as an area for study.

Telework and Identity

In these final sections of the chapter I bring together all of the topics previously examined, providing a synthesis of existing literature which contributes to the exploration of (gendered) identity issues in the context of home-based telework. I explore what the current literature suggests about how this mode of work might interact with family life and career, and constructions of the associated identities of parent and professional.

Few people have been explicit in researching issues of identity in the context of home-based work, despite many allusions to this theme. An exception is Baruch (2000). She proposes a total of five areas where telework might impact upon the individual worker and one of these is 'Identity'. She describes 'changed conceptions of one's self as an employee, family member, career aspirant' (p37), but it must be stressed that this is just one of five dimensions she examines (the others are less relevant to my study). It seems to me that, due to the ambitious scope of her project, her findings on this crucial (and to me, most interesting) matter are limited and underdeveloped. This, I propose is further compounded by her selection of a quantitative methodology which fails to do more than scratch the surface of this issue. Baruch dedicates just one bullet point to reporting the effects of telework upon individuals' identities, and concludes that 'teleworking did not change conceptions of oneself as an employee, as long as the teleworking share was balanced by work in the 'standard mode''. She continues 'It had a positive impact for the employee as a family member, and negative on career aspiration and future career perceptions' (p43). The complexity and rich detail of the lived experience of telework is ignored here and cries out for more thorough and sympathetic investigation. What about those who work from home full time? What is the nature of the positive effects on family life and the negative effects on career?

Do these findings apply to all teleworkers regardless of gender, social and material circumstance?

A further exception is Brocklehurst (2001) who examined the experiences of a group of professional workers as they began teleworking and explored issues of identity through the lens of Giddens' work on power and subjectivity (1984, 1990 and 1991). This work however focuses solely on professional elements of identity, neglecting those other elements which might also be relevant to teleworkers, notably the parental. Brocklehurst's work also neglects the possible gendered aspects of identity construction which I feel are worthy of attention. He does however open the doors for critical reflection upon the level of control an individual organisation (and indeed capitalism more generally) might hold over one's presentation of self, a debate ignited by Fournier (1999), whose work I consider further towards the end of this chapter.

Albert et al (2000, p14) suggest that 'it is because identity is problematic – and yet so crucial to how and what one values, thinks, feels, and does in all social domains, including organizations – that the dynamics of identity need to be better understood' and I hope that my current project goes beyond the work started by Baruch (2000) and Brocklehurst (2001) to provide a more thorough exploration of parental and professional identities in the context of home-based telework. In the following sections I present home-based telework, not just as a mode of work, but as a theoretically rich concept, capable of changing the (socially constructed) boundaries of the realms work and home, and the roles of parent and professional, and perhaps even of shaking up the dominant discourses which gender these domains and seem to propagate social inequalities.

Telework and Boundary Work

In pre-industrialised society labour and leisure, work and home, career and family, were not entirely discreet, compartmentalised concepts in the same sense they seem to have become following the industrial revolution (Felstead et al, 2005). Many writers (Surman, 2002, Tietze and Musson, 2002, to name a

few) have theorised that home-based telework is a concept which highlights the constructed nature of these boundaries, particularly divisions between public organisations and private households, and consequently between the often competing concepts of family and career, allowing the roles of parent and professional to come into question (Lupton, 1998). Implicit in the construction of these roles, domains, and ideas, is the added variable of gender: just as Morgan (1996) stresses that the concept of care is constructed as female, it is argued that the concept of career is constructed as male (Kanter, 1977).

These categories are generally presented in the literature as dichotomous – as pairs of concepts in opposition (Tietze et al, 2003) - and inevitably exist in a hierarchy of prestige and power in which one half is usually devalued, and, as Martin and Knopoff (2004, p7) comment, 'the devalued half is often the one associated with women'. Martin and Knopoff (2004, p7) further reveal that 'dichotomies exaggerate sources of dissimilarity, deny similarities and ambiguities, and omit all that does not fit'. But how is the construction of these supposed 'separate spheres' affected when brought together by home-based telework? Tietze and Musson (2002, p315) propose that the culturally different spheres of work and home 'are becoming more fused'. They propose that telework 'recasts the relationship between 'work' and 'home', necessitating the individual to engage reflectively with both spheres', as the distinction between the two becomes increasingly 'blurred and relaxed'. Felstead et al (2005, p98) describe the way in which the two arenas come together as 'workscape meets homescape' and 'homemode' meets 'workmode'. They remark that, through telework, 'two very different ways of life are brought into close physical proximity, each with their distinctive timetables, rituals, rules, etiquettes, practices, values and ceremonies' (p99).

Campbell-Clark's (2000) 'Work / Family Border theory' might be insightful here, although she does not explicitly discuss telework. She claims that people are 'daily border-crossers' (p747) between the two worlds of work and home and stresses that whilst these domains are culturally distinct they influence one another. She also stresses that people do not simply *react* to these spheres but are *enactive* and *proactive*. Of her own participants she observes: 'they moved back and forth between their work and family lives, shaping each as they went

by negotiating and communicating' (p751). She claims that the people who populate the two domains (ie. work colleagues, clients and managers 'vs' one's family) act as 'border keepers', enhancing the segregation of the domains, but she also proposes that there are often permeations, for example intrusions (such as phone calls), material crossovers (ie. artefacts) or psychological or emotional insights from the other domain, all of which might be perceived as either positive or negative – articulated variously as either inspirations or intrusions. Campbell-Clarke (2000) furthermore claims that the crossing of borders creates an ambiguous 'borderland' or 'area of blending'. Kossek et al (2006) examined the 'boundary management strategies' of teleworkers, concluding that strategies which aim to integrate rather than separate the two domains more often lead to family-work conflict. Campbell-Clarke (2000), on the other hand, proposes that balance might be achieved through either segregation or integration and suggests that when the domains are very different (in terms of goals and values) a strong boundary should be maintained, but when the domains are similar, balance might be achieved through more flexible and permeable boundaries.

On a practical level, Felstead et al (2005, p111) question 'how professional and managerial staff organise spaces of work within the home'. They found that home-based teleworkers' approaches to organising their working space within the home exist on a continuum and could be understood through the following categories:

- Assimilation – where 'the aesthetic look and feel of the home environment obscures work'
- Collision – where 'both domesticity and employment compete for the same space'
- Detachment – where there is 'clear and precise physical and aesthetic segregation of working space and domestic space'
- Juxtaposition – where 'work activities are clearly demarcated from the rest of the house but are within sight, sound and touch'
- Synthesis – where 'the worlds of work and home are blended and fused'

(quotes are from Felstead et al, in Pole 2004 p107-109)

They found that the majority of their sample group had a strategy of detachment. Surman (2002, p209) offers what might be an explanation for this finding: whilst she reports that 'telework has been widely celebrated as a way to overcome the constructed division between home and work', through her own research she found that 'far from celebrating the predicted blurring of this division' her sample group 'felt vulnerable and uneasy at the loss of this familiar point of reference'. They therefore sought to recreate this division, although in a somewhat artificial manner, 'as a useful way to make sense of and order their lives'. She concludes 'the boundary between work and home may be weakened structurally, but teleworkers willingly and actively seek to strengthen it symbolically' (p209). Baruch (2000, p37) agrees that 'boundaries are needed to separate what is included in work and what is excluded' and claims that 'ambiguous boundaries might increase possible stress'. She concludes that 'people need to distinguish between work and other facets of life, and having a separate study or room for work purposes is perceived as crucial' (p44).

Felstead et al (2005, p97) claim that working at home poses distinctive dilemmas and challenges and that 'responses to them generate a range of different ways in which people construct their lives.' So it is not only the physical spaces of work and home that are forced together in telework – social roles are also brought into closer proximity than in other forms of work, even other forms of 'flexible work'. Shumante and Fulk (2004, p58) describe a role boundary as 'a set of acceptable or expected activities that are negotiated between people in specified and understood roles'. They propose that individuals seek the ontological security to be found in separate coherent roles and that when the boundaries of roles are breached this will be experienced as a conflict. Nippert-Eng (1995) similarly suggests that 'boundary work' is required in order to ensure segmentation of roles and that this can take the form of routines and rituals.

Tietze and Musson (2002) highlight that the temporal regimes of work and home are also gendered. They discuss the traditional segregation between 'work time' and 'home time', resulting in 'different temporal regimes' for most conventional office-based workers, and question whether home-based

teleworkers imitate this traditional model; whether they create new modes of organising and scheduling their lives; or if they are somehow suspended between the two. The latter explanation is supported by Armstrong (1999 in Felstead and Jewson, 1999, p55) who suggests that 'individuals simultaneously experience fluidity in the boundaries between 'work' and 'non-work''. Similarly Bhaba (1990 in Smith and Winchester, 1998, p330) considers that 'such a space of negotiation is 'a place of hybridity', 'neither one nor the other'; 'a third space''. It could be theorised then, that telework creates a 'third space', perhaps even a unique environment where the renegotiation of identities might occur.

In sum, there seems to exist a tension associated with the idea and the practical experience of home-based telework. On the one hand there is an anxiety around maintaining the spheres of work and home as separate entities (Duxbury et al, 1998), where symbolic (Surman, 2002), physical (Felstead et al, 2005) and, I propose, discursive strategies are required to ensure that 'never the twain shall meet'; and, on the other hand, telework is embraced for its ability to, at least theoretically, merge, fuse, and recast these boundaries (Tietze and Musson, 2002), especially at a time when the concept of work life balance is so enthused.

I now consider what has been said of how this way of working might affect home and family life, before moving on to explore its impacts upon work and career. The associated identities of parent and professional are also considered – though the close interconnectivity of 'realms' and 'roles' is acknowledged and therefore my attempt to separate these out in the following sections is admittedly rather messy (perhaps echoing the ontological 'messiness' that teleworkers experience).

The interaction of telework with home, family and parental identity

In order to set the scene, Allan and Crow's (1989) work on the construction of 'home', is a useful reference. They describe home as theorised in three different ways: 1) as a private place; 2) as a place of security, control and freedom; and 3) as a place of creativity and expression. They stress that the idea of the home

is actively constructed around the family. They point out that 'family relationships are central to people's conceptions of home life' (p2) and that 'a well-decorated home is a symbol of a united family, representing its ongoing collective effort' (p11). They conclude that 'as the setting in which personal life is located, the home makes a strong claim on people's time, resources, and emotions' (p1). Home life is often seen as 'curtained off from the public gaze' held under a 'veil of secrecy' (ibid). Yet Allan and Crow (1989) argue that 'both the concept of 'home' and the distinction between public and private are more problematic than is often recognised' (p141). They propose that 'the contradictions which emerge from the study of the home reflect the existence of tensions between the uses to which the home is put and the complex character of the social relations which make up domestic life' (p12). Allan and Crow might not have realised in 1989 that the spread of the Internet, amongst other factors, would facilitate the growth of home-based telework and the use of the home for economic purposes. For some home has become a site for professional lives and identities to exist alongside the domestic and familial, perhaps directly competing for people's time, resources and emotions. I propose that this necessitates identity-related work, and entails a variety of costs, as well as rewards, for the individual as well as for their families – the nature of this work, and of these costs and rewards, are key to my enquiry.

As Felstead and Jewson (2000, p4) report 'campaigners and some academic researchers have highlighted the grim realities faced by many of those who work at home' in particular 'the stresses they encounter in reconciling 'two worlds in one''. Harpaz's (2002, p74) respondents complain of a 'lack of separation between work and home', and Felstead and Jewson (2000, in Tietze and Musson, 2002, p318) describe telework as 'the colonisation of previously private enclaves'. On the other hand Huws (1993, p52) suggests that 'in the popular imagination, the ability to combine work harmoniously with the demands of raising a family is often the main advantage of teleworking'; and Felstead and Jewson (2000, p4) explain that 'working at home has sometimes been portrayed as a utopian solution to the principle ills of modern society, promising to restore work satisfaction and rejuvenate family relations'. Mirchandani (1998), who focused solely on female teleworkers, concludes that this form of work allowed women 'to care for as well as about' (p168) their families more

effectively, particularly in enabling mothers to be present for significant moments in their child's life – but also by allowing them to create these significant moments for themselves. As Hochschild (1983) remarks, flexible work can foster new rituals of importance to the meaning of family life and in this way telework can be seen as reaffirming the notion of family. Taskin and Devos (2005) even describe telework as liberating, giving individuals greater control over their work and autonomy over scheduling this hand in hand with family responsibilities.

Duxbury et al (1998) provide useful literal descriptions which bring to life the contrasting images, presented in the paragraph above, of how telework might be experienced by mothers: the first is of a harried mother being pestered by a child, whilst clothes go unwashed and dinner is not started; the second is an idyllic picture of a mother working whilst a child plays contentedly at her feet, as a pot simmers on a nearby stove (p220). Christensen (in Duxbury et al, 1998, p226) is also sceptical of the possibilities telework has to ease a woman's burden, she describes claims in the literature, promoting telework as a way of emancipating women, as 'a cruel illusion, implying that a woman will be able to resolve these problems by simply changing the place where she works'. Furthermore, if, as Rich (1976) suggested earlier, women found liberation last century by emerging from the home and forging independent identities through paid working roles, should not home-based work be seen as a retrogressive step in the struggle for a more equal society? Phizacklea and Wolkowitz (1995) support this view, claiming that women who adopt home-based work must tolerate conditions where their work is undervalued, underpaid and trivialised by the men they live with due to internalising of ideas of traditional gender roles.

Bibby (1999, in Mann et al, 2000) claims that female teleworkers in particular experience guilt and worry about prioritising work over family and reports that these feelings appear to come to the fore when children are present in the home and being cared for by another adult while their mothers feel 'trapped' in the home-office, able to hear and 'feel' their offspring, yet unable to be with them. Women, it is suggested, may also feel unable to resist the guilt they feel when witnessing unwashed dishes or clothes (Bibby, 1999 in Mann et al, 2000), although men, on the whole, are reported to find working from home less

stressful in this respect (Olsen and Primps, 1990). Hylmo (2004, p47) proposes that 'men may be able to take work home but leave the family at the door, where as women may be expected to prioritise work over family', she suggests, furthermore, that male teleworkers 'may have support systems at home that female teleworkers do not have' (p47) ie. their wives or other (usually female) help.

Despite some speculation about the ways in which men might experience telework (usually where men are constructed as the powerful 'other' to oppressed women), there remains a gap in actual research activity and production of empirical forms of evidence. An interesting exception is Halford (2006) who examined home-working fathers, questioning if this mode of work could bring with it social change in terms of the gendered division of parenting, claiming that 'the spatial separation of work and home places strong limits on the transformation of fathering practices' (p397). She found, though, that for the men she questioned, 'the boundaries between work and home, public and private did not collapse, but were shifted in new directions' (p397), which is not to say that they did not continue to hold some meaning: 'these home-working fathers continue to operate with distinctions between work and home but these are made contingently, negotiated contextually and constructed creatively' (p400).

Flexible working policies, such as home-based telework, could in theory be an important device in bringing men physically and emotionally into family life – under-researched though the realities of this are. Correspondingly, it seems that working from home also has the potential to give mothers the chance to maintain equilibrium between work and family, but it is a matter of dispute whether telework lives up to these idealistic aims or if it is employed in a rather more cynical way by employers, for example to intensify productivity (as suggested by Felstead and Jewson, 2000). Indeed it is also claimed that traditional gender roles, far from being weakened, are in fact made more pronounced, when a woman works from home. Wilson and Greenhill (2004) for example vehemently contest claims made for teleworking's emancipatory potential for women. Exploring the experiences of both mothers and fathers who

telework will shed light on this debate as well as allowing discussion of how identities are constructed and performed in this context.

The interaction of telework with work, career and professional identity

Owen et al (in Duxbury et al, 1998, p226) claim that when a person teleworks, a greater percentage of their time is spent on paid work, compared to their office-based counterparts. This, they fear, results in the risk of 'workaholism', whereas, in contrast, Harpaz (2002, p74) proposes that 'key advantages to individuals are increased autonomy and flexibility'. Duxbury et al (1998), though, suggest that the flexibility gained is more of a benefit to the employer than to the individual worker and their family. They propose that contrasting messages are given to the employer and the family of teleworkers, for example, the employer believes they will benefit from intensified work, and the family believes that the employee will be more available to them – leaving the individual pulled in many directions. This was substantiated by one of Dwelly and Bennion's (2003) participants, who indeed felt that he was 'stretched out too thin' (p27). Mann et al (2000), and later Mann and Holdsworth (2003), sought to reveal the psychological impacts of teleworking, in terms of stress, emotion, and 'health' more generally. Mann et al (2000) describe the reduction or removal of travel-related stress, and stress caused by colleagues interrupting work in the traditional office setting, as one of the upsides of telework. They also point out that working from home allows the space to rediscover the intrinsic enjoyment of work.

A frequently cited negative dimension to working remotely is the increased isolation of the teleworker, leading to feelings of separation and loneliness (Ward and Shabna, 2001). This is said to happen because of a lack of emotional support from co-workers (Mann et al, 2000) who, because of the reduction in physical proximity, are no longer aware when support is required. Rokach (1997) goes so far as to describe these feelings in terms of alienation, abandonment and rejection. Alongside these negative emotions, it is said, run feelings of frustration, often caused by the absence of technical support and/or the lack of control and influence over other people in the traditional office

environment (Mann and Holdsworth, 2003). Home-based teleworkers are also said to feel increased guilt when calling in sick (Mann et al, 2000) and resentment or even anger, when work seems to dominate the home environment and family life. Frustration and resentment might also be experienced for different reasons, for example the intrusion of family members into work time (Dwelly and Bennion, 2003). In this vein Golden et al (2006, p1340) questions the directionality of work–family conflict in telework, concluding that this mode of work ‘has a differential impact on work-family conflict, such that the more extensively individuals work in this mode, the lower their work-to-family conflict, but the higher their family-to-work conflict’. They also conclude that ‘job autonomy and scheduling flexibility were found to positively moderate telecommuting’s impact on work-to-family conflict, but household size was found to negatively moderate telecommuting’s impact of family-to-work conflict, suggesting that contextual factors may be domain specific’ (ibid). Tremblay (2002) also stresses that worker autonomy can reduce the occurrence of conflict between work and home but proposes that, as it is men who more often achieve autonomy in work, it is they who are more likely to achieve work-life balance than women.

According to Baruch (2000, p34), despite burgeoning literature on telework, ‘it is rarely considered what may be the impact on people’s attitudes to work’. She concludes that ‘for some, working from home may create new career opportunities, whereas for others it might be a dead end path: out of sight (from Headquarters) is out of mind (when promotion decisions are being taken)’ (p37). She proposed that it might also lead to ‘questionable job security’ (p38) and ‘detachment of teleworkers from the organisational framework, expectations and systems’ (p40). In her study she found that co-workers, who were left behind in the traditional office environment, reacted with ‘suspicion, jealousy, or both’ (p43).

Giddens (1990 in Tietze and Musson, 2002) describes work as an ‘ontological reference point’ in identity construction, and explains how identity is usually ‘embedded’ in social contexts, as well as in time and space, but with the arrival of virtual ways of working this is now becoming ‘disembedded’. In the case of the home-based teleworker, some of the traditional buttresses of career,

particularly the physicality of being in a communal office, the ritual of commuting, and the social interactions of the corridor and coffee room are likely to disappear or lessen in frequency: as Huws (in Dwelly and Bennion, 2003, p2) exclaims 'there's no electronic substitute for the occasional exchange of pheromones'. In some cases the need to 'dress to impress', work the standard nine to five, and play a role in office politics, may also cease. So, without this physical context, will people working from home still aim to construct a coherent sense of self through their careers? Or will this new working environment allow them to 'escape' the most dominant discourses of career, that seem to resonate so highly in the social domain of organisational life, and instead present themselves in relation to other roles and discourses?

Fournier's work (1999, p280) casts doubt on this potential. She proposes that the discourse of professionalism holds 'a disciplinary logic' and contends that 'the mobilisation of the discursive resources of professionalism potentially allows for control at a distance through the construction of appropriate work identities and conducts' (p281). The phrase 'at a distance' is resonant with home-based modes of work, where this form of 'liberal government' (Foucault, 1978) could potentially operate. The idea of professionalism as a form of control 'follows a tradition which sees power and control over the labour process as being secured through the constitution of subjectivity – or technologies of the self' (Fournier, 1999, p293) and Fournier (1999, p1) draws upon Latour's (1987) idea of 'action at a distance' to suggest that 'self-regulating subjects' can be 'shaped and normalised' even when out of sight of the organisation.

Brocklehurst (2001) used Gidden's ideas of identity when exploring the experiences of those making the transition to telework and found that his participants 'directed their energies ... at recreating a work identity that was convincing to both themselves and others' and this was achieved through the configuration of working space and time, as well as through discursive routes. He neglected however to consider the construction of other roles, or to thoroughly explore the impact of gender upon the identity construction of teleworkers – a mantle which I aim to pick up through my own research.

In sum, for the individual worker the upsides of home-based telework appear to be limited to the removal of travel-related stress and the interruptions of a

traditional office; rediscovering the enjoyment of one's work; and a possible increase in autonomy and flexibility (though I questioned earlier the extent to which these are simply part of the 'rhetoric' of post-bureaucratic approaches). These seem to be outweighed by a heady list of downsides which include: possible workaholism; isolation; lack of emotional and technical support; possible loss of visibility, threatening job security; guilt; alienation; and rejection by work colleagues, though Golden et al (2006) counsel us to take into consideration contextual factors which might affect which of these any one teleworker may experience.

It would seem that home-based teleworkers who choose to continue to construct themselves in terms of professional identity might find themselves disembedded from the dominant discourses of career, which might be experienced as problematic or indeed as liberating, and might even enable the utilisation or creation 'new' discourses of professionalism. An alternative strategy might be to distance one's self from the identity of 'worker' and instead focus upon alternative roles, for example the parental, but is this desirable for all teleworkers? And is this even possible if a) a 'disciplinary logic' operates to tie people to notions of professionalism, even when work is at a distance, and b) when a focus on the role of parent seems far more accessible to women than to men?

Chapter Conclusion

Roles, as institutional structures, provide an enduring, though not static, framework for identity construction. My review of existing literature suggests that much attention has been given to how men and women perform different roles at work and how they perform different roles in the home (particularly with respect to childrearing), yet these two areas of study seem to be uncoupled and undertaken separately from each other. My current research seeks to marry these two issues through the lens of home-based telework, which creates an urgent and immediate need to face the identity-related issues which occur when two 'selves' are performed in a single space. Although some attention has been given to how the realms of work and home are spatially and temporally

configured in telework, less has been given to explicitly addressing how this form of work interacts with the associated identity roles of parent and professional. Also neglected are questions about the work that this negotiation/prioritisation of roles might require, and what the costs and rewards of this might be.

The literature leads me to the overall assumption that, in general, women are likely to prioritise their parental identities and men are likely to prioritise their professional ones: the parental role being more accessible and legitimate for women and the professional role being more accessible and legitimate for men. This echoes gender role-expectations theory (see Galinsky and Stein, 1990). However a clear tension has emerged from the literature, which suggests that neither the privileging of parental or professional roles is unproblematic. Feminist critics (eg. Rich, 1976) might judge women who favour parental roles as oppressed by the forces of patriarchy and in need of liberation, and 'books about men' (Bly, 1990, Moir and Moir, 1998) seem to mock the 'new man' who wishes to favour his role as a parent; whereas critics who lean toward anti-managerialism (eg. Fournier, 1999) appear to judge those of either sex who prioritise professional selves as seduced by the disciplinary reach of capitalism.

Echoing Sennett's (1998) key theme I propose that this has led to a crisis of identity in society today, leading to substantial frustration for many who are left in a 'no win' situation by this paradox, which deems neither devotion to the parental or professional role entirely satisfactory. Recourse to ideas and practices of 'balance' seems to have done little to ease this malaise, yet it would seem that those who work from home might magnify this important existential dilemma in their discursive constructions of self, as the usual inter-relational, practical, and material resources may slip out of reach when work is performed away from the traditional organisational setting. I aim to explore whether such, traditionally gendered, identities are challenged or magnified by the adoption of home-based telework, by conducting an analysis of discourses. Details of the methodology of this investigation are outlined in the next chapter.

Chapter 3 –Philosophy and Methods

Introduction

In this chapter I discuss the philosophical considerations which have contributed to this project. I also outline the methods that were employed to collect and analyse the original empirical data which was required in order to address the questions, as presented in chapter one. My methodology draws heavily from the existing method of discourse analysis, which, as I employ it, is a qualitative methodology, and involves the analysis of 'texts': usually written or spoken (whether 'naturally occurring' or scripted) material. My own study sought to create a series of 'new' texts through soliciting participation, by home-based teleworking parents, in semi-structured interviews, where they were invited to recount their lived experiences of working from home, and thereby add to, and perhaps challenge, existing understandings of how men and women construct themselves in this ambiguous context. My analysis entailed identifying which discourses, relevant to the construction of parental and professional identities, feature most prominently in such texts; exploring how the various participants employed and experienced these; and considering why this might be. This necessitated a reflexive and subjective approach from myself as the sole researcher, which draws upon critical approaches from organisation studies (as introduced in chapter one).

Through the present chapter I explain my research approach and describe in detail how the data was collected and analysed. Firstly I set the scene for the approach I have taken by discussing the intellectual context, in particular those critical approaches that have inspired my work and the philosophy of social constructionism. I then attempt to define discourse analysis, which, though still a somewhat marginal methodology, is becoming increasingly influential in organisational studies (Grant and Hardy, 2003). Next I describe the actual practice of discourse analysis - explaining how, in the specific circumstances of this research project, I decided on the size of my sample and sourced the participants, how I conducted the interviews and ultimately how I analysed the

data collected. I conclude with some thoughts about evaluation of the methodology.

The Intellectual context

As with any research method, discourse analysis, which informs my methodology, has emerged from a specific intellectual context. Aligned with and perhaps underpinning interest in this approach has been the rise of critical approaches to studies of organisation more generally. The origins of critical theory, as it exists in organisation studies, can be traced back as far as the Frankfurt School who, during the 1920s and 1930s combined the great thinkers of the day from social science, politics and philosophy and as Alvesson and Wilmott (1996, p68) explain: their 'mission involved fundamental questioning of the claim that social science can and should produce objective, value-free knowledge of social reality'. Its roots though can be seen as going back all the way to the enlightenment: 'when knowledge based upon empirical investigation began to challenge established dogmas that had been preserved and sanctified by tradition and religion' (Alvesson and Wilmott, 1996, p73).

Critical theory in organisation studies has received more of a legitimate status since Burrell and Morgan (1979) produced their model of paradigms, proposing that there are many different ways to study organisations, and whilst these may be incommensurable, all are valid. Their model places critical theory as a subjective radical humanist approach, which seeks fundamental change to current models of organisation, rather than regulation and continuation of the status quo. Grey (2005) more recently focuses on one key distinction regarding dominant approaches to organisational research: positivist managerialists 'vs' interpretivist critics. Positivists believe that there is an objective social reality to be discovered and they use quasi-scientific methods to try to measure (and usually quantify) this world, producing generalisable rules and thereby prescriptions for manager to follow in order to be in command of this world. Positivists tend to be managerialists, in the sense that they provide managers with tools which are thought to control labour whilst maximising efficiency and profits. Interpretivists on the other hand believe that there are various

organisational 'realities', experienced subjectively by individuals, and seek to explore these qualitatively, seeking rich description rather than any one 'truth'. Interpretivists tend to be critics as they are critical of the status quo of both capitalist organisation and of the dominant methods currently employed to study these. They tend to have a focus on the needs of the managed as opposed to those who manage (Grey, 2005). According to Gill (2000, p177) selecting discourse analysis 'entails a radical epistemological shift' towards critical interpretive ways of thinking, which have emerged in response to criticism of the more dominant positivist epistemology.

Critical theory has recently been called into question itself and is now recognised by many to be a loose grouping of critical approaches rather than one unified theory. It might still be fair to say that these approaches share some fundamental features. According to Alvesson and Wilmott (1996), those engaging in critical approaches:

- View management as a social practice
- See mainstream management theory as mystifying the power relations which exist in organisations
- Recognise the tensions which exist between the lived experience of management and 'official' versions in mainstream literature and 'anticipate the possibility of resolving them through a transformation of power relations' (ibid, p38)
- Recognise that critical studies are themselves 'a product of prevailing relations of power' (ibid)
- And are guided by 'emancipatory intent'

Discourse analytic researchers are usually considered to be part of a critical approach, as they 'are often concerned with political issues, seeking to explore situations that oppress or advantage certain groups in society' (Dick, 2004, p212) and I align my own ambitions as a researcher with this aim. They are also often seen to take a constructionist perspective. An introduction is given to social constructionism in the previous chapter, where I outline Burr's four oft-cited tenets (1995), and I expand on those initial ideas here.

Burr (1995) suggests that today's understandings of social constructionism have largely been influenced by French intellectuals and post-structuralist thinkers such as Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida and, in a later volume (2003), she goes on to explain the key differences between this view and traditional and social psychology:

'Anti-essentialism'

'There are no essences inside things or people that make them what they are' (Burr, 2003, p5) in other words, in the social constructionist view people have 'no definable or discoverable nature' (ibid, p6)

'Questioning Realism'

'Social constructionism denies that our knowledge is a direct perception of reality. In fact it might be said that as a culture or society we construct our own versions of reality' (ibid, p6). By association social constructionists also reject the idea of an objective truth

'Historical and cultural specificity of knowledge'

Social constructionism challenges traditional psychology to accept that all knowledge is 'time and culture-bound and cannot be taken as once and for all descriptions of human nature' (ibid, p7)

'Language as a precondition for thought'

Whereas much traditional psychology views language simply as an expression of thought, social constructionism stresses that 'we are born into a world where the conceptual frameworks and categories already exist' (ibid)

'Language as a form of social action'

Language is seen by social constructionists as more than a form of passive expression but as a form of social action in itself

'A focus on interaction and social processes'

'social constructionism regards as the proper focus of our enquiry the social practices engaged in by people, and their interactions with each other' (ibid, p9)

'A focus on processes'

The aim for the social constructionist is more on processes than entities or structures. Knowledge, for example, 'is not something one has, but is something that people do together' (ibid, p9, emphasis added)

Showing the popularity of social constructionism amongst discourse analysts, Gill (2000) proposes that most discourse analysts are anti-realist, in their view that language does not simply reflect reality but constitutes it. As Potter and Wetherell (1995, p82) comment, most discourse approaches 'rather than seeing the important business of psychological processing taking place *underneath* this content, it treats this content as literally where the action is' (original emphasis). Dick (2004, p203) also outlines the view that for most discourse analysts 'language is not seen as *reflecting* the nature of individuals, of relationships and of the world, but as actively *constructing* these domains'. These views align neatly with social constructionism as Burr, rather broadly, defines it.

Whilst many link all discourse analysis to social constructionism, it is not strictly the case that this method and philosophy will always go hand in hand – two notable exceptions are Fairclough and Watson, who both situate themselves within a 'realist' ontology, though Watson stresses that his is a 'critical realist' perspective. Nevertheless both of these popular contributors to the discourse analysis literature are seemingly at odds with social constructionism.

Fairclough's (2003, p14) view is that 'both concrete social events and abstract social structures, as well as the rather less abstract 'social practices'... are part of reality', whilst Watson (2008, p3) expresses his ontological discomfort with the notion that 'human subjectivities are constituted or 'brought into being' by discourse'. We shall see in the sections below how these two theorists provide a different perspective to many discourse analysts and how they contribute their own approaches.

Whilst it seems there is a strict division between the realist and anti-realist, constructionist, stance, Burr highlights an important consideration which shows that this issue might not be so clear cut: she proposes that when Derrida claims 'there is nothing outside the text' (1976, p158 as cited in Burr, 2003, p67), he and therefore other social constructionists 'are not denying the existence of a

material world but are pointing out that our engagement with the world of things and events is dependent upon the meaning that discourses give these' (Burr, 2003, p67). I have grappled here with some rather complex philosophical ideas. Through the sections which follow I will explore these further and locate myself within these debates, as I explain other people's, then my own, approach to discourse analysis.

'57 varieties' of discourse analysis

Gill (2000) suggests that there are at least '57 varieties' of discourse analysis. She proposes that both 'the terms discourse and discourse analysis are highly contested' (Gill, 2000, p173). Iedema (2007, p931) agrees, commenting upon 'conceptual ambiguities in the definition of 'discourse'' and Alvesson and Karreman (2000, p1126) reveal that 'there is a wide array of ways of using the term discourse', yet in many texts, they propose, 'there are no definitions or discussions of what discourse means' (ibid) prior to the promotion of discourse analysis as a legitimate method of research. Here I attempt to ensure that I do not fall into the trap of overlooking the important issue of definitions, and therefore, following a review of existing ways of defining these terms, I explicitly outline my own definitions of 'discourse' and 'discourse analysis', which will initially apply specifically to this research project (though these may also prove to be useful foundations upon which other discourse analytic researchers might build their own definitions).

What is (a) discourse?

It seems sensible to begin by considering definitions of the term discourse, before attempting to pin down what an analysis of discourse or discourses might entail. The term discourse seems to produce two over-riding explanations. The first is that discourse is a synonym for conversation: all spoken interaction between people – and therefore, in linguistics in particular, studies of discourse might refer very broadly to the examination of speech acts. The second understanding, which is gaining some agreement in the domain of

social research, is of discourses as meta-narratives or common treatments of a particular topic, which act as culturally available resources for people to draw upon to construct their world and consequently construct, and come to understand, themselves and their role/s in the broader social domain. Discourses are thereby claimed by many to be the linguistic resources which bring subject positions to life: they name the roles we embody and provide certain (to some degree fixed) vocabularies for discussing these roles.

Burr (1995, p64) for example suggests that 'a discourse refers to a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events'. Similarly Potter and Wetherell (1995, p81) talk about discursive resources as 'the building blocks of convincing or at least rhetorically sustainable versions' of reality. Grant and Hardy (2003, p6) draw on Parker's (1992) definition of discourse to describe it as 'sets of statements that bring social objects into being', hence this view of discourse, cannot be understood without some recourse to the epistemology of social constructionism (which is outlined above). Watson (2008) however sounds a note of caution in 'over-privileging' the role of language in analyses of how people experience organisational and broader social life, at the expense of other factors which also play a significant part: social and material circumstances for example. It is easy, he proposes, to begin to see identity as a wholly narrative phenomenon if a narrow 'narratological' approach to research is taken – in the manner of a self-fulfilling prophecy. He does however urge discourse analysts to remain 'language-sensitive': 'recognising that language does not, on the one hand, bring the social world 'into being' but neither does it, on the other hand, merely 'describe' the world' (ibid, p5).

Tietze et al (2003, p80-81) draw on a definition of discourse from Watson's earlier work (1995) to create a comprehensive and useful description: 'a connected set of statements, concepts, terms and expressions which constitutes a way of talking or writing about a particular issue, thus framing the way people understand and respond with respect to that issue... [discourses] function as menus of discursive resources which various social actors draw on in different ways at different times to achieve their particular purposes'. The

metaphor of discourses as 'framing devices' (Tietze et al, 2003) is helpful as it illuminates the idea that it "rules in' certain ways of talking about a topic, defining an acceptable and intelligible way to talk, write or conduct oneself' and also 'rules out', limits and restricts other ways of talking and conducting oneself in relation to the topic or constructing knowledge about it' (Hall, 2001, p72 as cited in Grant and Hardy, 2003, p6). Dick (2004, p203) takes a similarly critical view. She contends that discourses are 'neither incidental nor arbitrary: they have distinct regulatory and ideological functions, and are hence productive of social practice'.

What is discourse analysis?

Wetherell et al (2001, p2) give a rather vague definition of discourse analysis as 'a way of finding out how consequential bits of social life are done', yet, importantly, this invites us to view social life as a dynamic process: we 'do' social life, and therefore might also talk in terms of 'doing' professionalism or 'doing' parenthood (as pertinent to the present study). Dick (2004, p203) is more specific: discourse analysis, she contends, is 'a method that examines how individuals use language to produce explanations of themselves, their relationships and the world in general', this crucially links language to identity as one of the key resources in its construction, echoing Potter and Wetherell's (1995) previously mentioned metaphor of discourses as the building blocks of our realities. Paltridge (2006, p2) suggests that discourse analysis considers 'how views of the world, and identities, are constructed through the use of discourse'; it 'helps us understand the 'rules of the game' that language users draw on in their everyday spoken and written interactions' (p20). But again it could be said that this slips into what Watson (2008) might label the excessiveness of the linguistic turn in organisation studies. Watson suggests 'language is everywhere. Without language, nothing can be achieved socially. But language is not everything' (ibid, p10).

Several writers refer to different forms or 'brands' of discourse analysis. Wetherell et al (2001) for example distinguish between forms in terms of the school of research which inform them (eg. whether socio-linguistics or

discursive psychology) as well as in terms of the key figure whose ideas are behind a recognised approach (eg. Foucault or Bakhtan). Gill (2000, p172) once again refers to the multiple understandings of discourse analysis: 'discourse analysis is the name given to a variety of different approaches to the study of texts, which have developed from different theoretical traditions and diverse disciplinary locations. Strictly speaking, there is no single 'discourse analysis' but many different styles of analysis that all lay claim to the name'. She also, however, adds a caveat, which shows that the thread which ties together many of these approaches in the social research arena is an epistemological one: 'what these perspectives share is a rejection of the realist notion that language is simply a neutral way of reflecting or describing the world, and a conviction in the central importance of discourse in constructing social life' (Gill, 2000, p172). Watson (2008) meanwhile, counsels organisational researchers to adopt the standpoint of the 'critical realist': 'this insists on the reality of structures, processes and causal mechanisms which operate beneath the surface of social reality' (p3-4) rather than degenerating into an 'idealist regress' which denies 'social and material reality and the structures or mechanisms through which it is generated, elaborated and transformed' (ibid, p4).

For Fairclough (2003, p2) there are two main approaches to discourse analysis: 'one major division is between approaches which include detailed analysis of texts, and approaches which don't'. He uses the term 'textually oriented discourse analysis' to distinguish the two forms (Fairclough, 1992). Paltridge (2006, p1) similarly talks of there being 'textually oriented views which concentrate mostly on language features of texts, to more socially oriented views of discourse analysis which consider what the text is doing in the social and cultural setting in which it occurs'. Fairclough stresses that he does not believe that this should be an either/or decision, rather: 'I see discourse analysis as 'oscillating' between a focus on specific texts and a focus on what I call 'the order of discourse', the relatively durable structuring and networking of social practices' (2003, p3). Paltridge (2006, p8) reflects that here Fairclough is 'arguing for an analysis of discourse that is both linguistic and social in its orientation' and this idea is the basis of Fairclough's own particular brand of 'critical discourse analysis'.

Alvesson and Kärreman (2000) also distinguish between forms of discourse analysis which a) focus upon written and spoken texts as ends in themselves, which examine what they label as 'discourse' – with a small 'd' – and b) 'the study of social reality as discursively constructed and maintained' (p1126), which addresses what they label 'Discourse' – with a capital 'D' - exploring 'the stuff beyond the text functioning as a powerful ordering force' (p1126); 'an interest in understanding broader, more generalised vocabularies / ways of structuring the social world' (p1129). This echoes the division which Fairclough sees as prominent in discourse analytic approaches, but which he claims should not represent a choice, rather discourse analysis, in his view, should examine the dynamic conversation which takes place between the two. Grant and Hardy (2003, p8) agree, they stress that the goal of discourse analysis should be 'trying to trace the complex sets of connections that take us from the macro to the micro and back again'. Grant and Hardy (2003) propose that looking between meta and micro texts might be referred to as intertextuality (a concept familiar in Bakhtian approaches): 'this intertextual perspective leads them [critical discourse analysts] to identify and analyse specific, micro level instances of discursive action and then locate them in the context of other macro level, 'meta' or 'grand' discourses' (Grant and Hardy, 2003, p8). In their view discourse analysis is about exploring 'the interplay between the production of texts at the local level, the broader discourses that interpolate them, and the context that is made up from them through the negotiation of meaning' (ibid).

In a similar vein Potter and Wetherell (1995) contend that discourse analysis is primarily about the relationship between 'practices and resources': discourse analysis, according to them, is 'concerned with what people do with their talk and writing (discourse practices) and also with the sorts of resources that people draw on in the course of those practices' (p81). They stress that discourse analysis 'necessitates a combined focus on discursive practices and resources' – discursive practices include those micro actions which produce texts such as the utterances of people in everyday talk, or the talk presented by individuals in an interview situation; and the resources drawn upon to construct these texts (and in turn might be (re)produced through such interactions) are those grandiose socially available meta narratives, which can both inform and limit our subjectivity. In sum Potter and Wetherell (1995) propose that discourse

analysis is the analysis of the 'interpretive repertoires' available and accessible to certain people at certain times in certain contexts: 'which provide a machinery for social life' (ibid, p81).

Paltridge (2006, p9) is another to espouse the double nature of discourse analysis as both 'a view of language at the level of text' and 'of language in use', concluding that its aim is to explore 'how, through the use of language, people achieve certain communicative acts, participate in certain communicative events and present themselves to others'. Fairclough (1995, p8) also makes the link between discourse and the presentation of self, he proposes that discourse analysis explores how 'people attempt to work out textually, in their use of language, the dilemmas they face in defining their own identities' (Fairclough, 1995, p8). Watson (2008) proposes that a discourse analysis can illuminate examples of both language in action and identity work in practice. Discourse analysis thereby reveals itself as an ideal method to employ in order to address questions of identity construction in a specific and unique context, in a critical manner – it therefore suits the questions which have emerged from my review of the relevant literatures, as well as my own approach to research, underpinned, of course, by my particular epistemological standpoint.

Discourse and discourse analysis: project-specific definitions

At the outset of this project I felt that I knew exactly what was meant by the term 'discourse', almost intuitively. I thought it a pretty much unambiguous and straightforward notion but now that I have engaged more deeply with the literature on this topic, and have been forced to try to articulate my own stance in relation to this, I realise that 'discourse' means different things to different people, in different 'schools', with different agendas. Below I outline my own view of discourse and of discourse analysis, which can be seen as project-specific definitions (just as I proposed a project-specific definition for 'telework' earlier in this thesis as a way around the complexities and ambiguities of that term). I see discourses as:

'Hard to resist messages about how life is, or should be, which reveal themselves as we verbally, physically and materially present our lives and are evident in the roles we inhabit, actions we take (including our talk), and the practices we engage in'

Discourse analysis in my view is:

'The creation or identification of texts through which to explore what discourses are available to whom in specific contexts, and how individuals either utilise, defy, or subvert these'

The idea of discourses as 'messages' is similar to Alvesson and Kärreman's (2000) idea of grandiose discourse (which they would have stated with a capital 'D'), as well as Potter and Wetherell's (1987) 'cultural repertoires'. These 'meta-narratives' provide a structural foundation to our lives as social beings. In my view, as outlined above, discourses are enduring (as systems such as patriarchy and capitalism remain dominant), but are not impossible to resist or challenge, though this may be restricted to those holding considerable cultural power in society OR might emerge at times of considerable social change. It is this contention that leads me to question whether home-based telework might provide just such a fertile context for the transformation of how parental and professional life is experienced by men and women, and for gender relations in society more generally. In the context of those thorny debates about realist versus anti-realist positioning I can only conclude that language is a powerful ordering force but there is also a material and social world which exists outside of language, but which is ultimately understood through language. Furthermore in my view discourse analysis is always implicitly (if not explicitly) an exploration of who holds power in society and how it operates.

The definitions I have created, and outline above, also promote the idea that discourses can be analysed in a 'multi-modal' fashion (Iedema, 2007), by examining visually realised as well as spoken data, which I see as intertwined and not entirely separable. But I feel that any analysis can only ever be partial and therefore contend that it might be best to approach this through the examination of just one of these 'strands' at a time. Analysing discourse by

examining spoken 'texts' is promoted in the literature as an effective way of glimpsing the dominant social structures which attempt to tie us to certain legitimate social positions and therefore seems a most useful way to explore how working from home might interact with the reproduction of the gendered roles of 'worker' and 'parent'. Whilst the verbal data collected is central to my analysis, as I explain above, I do however have sympathy with Watson's view that 'language is not everything' and therefore I cannot lay claim to providing a comprehensive answer to the questions selected, but only present my exploration of these issues in line with the data available. My own approach to discourse analysis (which I explain in detail later in this chapter) does however maintain some awareness of the range of circumstances in which the participants live their lives, which might also impact upon their identity work and presentations of self. I do however acknowledge the myriad ways in this data might have been 'read' by other people; as Gill (2000, p188) states 'in the final analysis, a discourse analysis is an *interpretation*, warranted by detailed argument and attention to the material being studied'.

The practice of discourse analysis

I now present a description of how I performed the research which informs the current project. First of all I focus on how I collected the data, including a discussion of why I decided to assemble and utilise original data in the first place, and why I used semi-structured interviews to do so; how I decided who I would target for my sample; how I sourced the final fourteen participants and negotiated access; and of course how I conducted the interviews and captured the data. Secondly I describe the process of analysing the data: transcribing, coding and identifying the discourses present; and over all creating a useful framework to be able to address the questions I have chosen to explore, in order to add something original and useful to these debates and literatures. In sum, here I present my own idiosyncratic approach to the methodology of discourse analysis.

Collecting the data

As discourse analysis involves the gathering of certain texts to be 'read' by the researcher in a particular manner (for example by performing a 'sceptical reading' (Gill, 2000) whilst remaining discourse-aware), it is possible to simply identify existing data from artefacts created or captured by other people (such as documentary film clips; transcribed interview records; or autobiographical written accounts). In the case of the present study however, I deemed it necessary to collect original data by conducting interviews and using these transcripts as the 'texts' to be analysed, supported by my field notes and the biographical information I gathered about the participants. The rationale for collecting original data was that, to my knowledge, there is a limited number of accounts available in which parents, and fathers in particular, depict their experiences of home-based telework, and describe 'doing' professionalism and parenthood in this context. Conducting my own interviews therefore allowed me to be able to source data that was both comprehensive enough to ensure that all of the relevant topics were covered by the participants, and also targeted enough that the texts produced did not require a large amount of filtering for sections of conversation which I felt were less relevant to achieving the aims of my own study.

I acknowledge that in eliciting the creation of such texts, through my role as the researcher / interviewer, I myself played a key part in instigating and leading the direction of these conversations (particularly as I created and held the 'interview guide') and therefore in dictating the ultimate 'shape' of the texts produced. The perception that each participant held of me, as an individual in this role, and of the purpose of my research, also undoubtedly affected what story they wished to tell and how they chose to relate this to me (and perhaps to an imagined wider audience in the academic or practitioner arena). As Dick (2004, p207) comments 'the participant makes a social reading of the interview and the interviewer and this has a fundamental effect on the nature of the data produced'. Whilst I acknowledge this 'interviewer bias' or 'interviewer effect' I do not seek to apologise for or downplay this. I propose that this phenomenon emerges in **all** data collection (and indeed analysis, which is considered later in this chapter); a conversation – which is what I believe an interview should

resemble (though I acknowledge the specificities of this form) – is an interaction between two people who hold a relationship with particular power dynamics. My situation was particularly interesting as it is usually the interviewer who is assumed to be ‘in control’ during the data collection process, yet I felt that my status was effected both by my admission of being a student interviewer (a role which I propose might attract less prestige than a more experienced professional or academic researcher) and also because the interviews took place in the participants own homes – domains where they might be seen to be in control, with myself, as an outsider, naturally less at ease. Issues such as my age, gender and physical appearance might also have had some bearing, as certainly did the content and delivery of the questions I asked. In sum it is inevitable that the text which results from an interview is collaboratively produced by the interviewer and interviewee, bearing in mind the intricacies and power dynamics of the specific interview context and the circumstances surrounding this; and I am open and reflexive about this, not claiming at any point that the data created between myself and each participant might be taken as some kind of definitive truth, but as a series of constructions, each of which occurred in a particular space and time.

I chose to collect the data using semi-structured interviews. These were chosen because they can be structured around an ‘interview guide’ (see appendix 1) to allow for some comparability between participants’ responses yet remain flexible enough to produce ‘rich description’ (Geertz, 1973). Interviews allow the study of phenomena not easily separated from their context, which is precisely how I would describe home-based telework. They seem to produce broader, deeper, richer accounts than those created by other methods, and can allow access to issues not talked about in everyday conversation. Indeed participants may have found the interviews therapeutic and a chance to develop self-understanding, they might therefore be considered emancipatory to some degree, in allowing the participants time to reflect upon their experiences of telework and parenting and the level of autonomy they may have had in constructing satisfactory selves – though this also puts an onus on the interviewer to act in a responsible manner in this regard. Interviews are also useful as the face to face contact they enable gives the researcher chance to follow up more interesting topics, probe deeper, and ask for clarification.

In order to have a 'dry run' prior to the actual data collection phase, I conducted a pilot study with an acquaintance of mine, an academic and a father, who works from home for a portion of each week. This enabled a practice run with the recording technology and aimed to highlight any difficulties with the methodology - including my interviewing technique! - and also allowed for refinement of the interview guide prior to the initiation of the official project. Only one issue emerged and this concerned the question 'what does career mean to you?'. It had not occurred to me that this could have an ambiguous meaning, so I amended the question to ask instead 'what does *your* career mean to you?', to ensure that it was clear that I was asking about the importance and meaningfulness of career to the participants themselves, as opposed to seeking a generic definition of the term. The pilot study took place in March 2004, and the collection of data that was used in this study was collected between July 2004 and June 2005. Participants were asked to provide some basic details about themselves on a summary form which I created (see appendix 2) in order to capture some basic biographical details which might provide useful comparators, and this sheet also allowed them to formally declare their willingness to take part in the study and provide a record of this, which I felt was ethically, and potentially legally, important.

Each interview lasted between fifty and one hundred minutes and each participant was interviewed once. The texts produced therefore represent highly conditional 'snapshots' of how these individuals presented themselves and talked about telework and parenting with me at these specific moments in their lives. The interviews took place in each participant's own home, which was a conscious decision by me to capture their identity work in the very domain where telework takes place. This might also have put the participants more at ease, as there was no manager or other organisational representative physically present – and this meant that it was not strictly necessary for me to ask the permission of the employing organisation, as the interviews were officially 'off-site', the onus was therefore on the individual interviewee to discuss their participation in this project with their manager, if they deemed it necessary. I now describe how I decided who I wanted to interview and how I engaged them in my project.

Deciding on a target group and sourcing the participants

Once I had constructed a definition of a home-based teleworker which I was happy with, which was based on a review of definitions in the existing literature (see chapter two) as well as the needs of this project, this gave me some basic parameters which I could use to construct a potential sample group of participants. My definition: *'a professional worker who works from their home for at least half of their paid working hours, either as an employee or through contractual obligations to one or more organisations, and who utilises ICTs as a key part of their role'* was the starting point. But, as I also wanted to focus solely on parents, I added the stipulation that participants should be the 'live in parent' of one or more child aged 16 or under— this, I felt, would ensure that participants would have some sense of a parental identity, as well as a professional identity, and that home-based telework might be dominant enough in their daily lives to have some impact upon the construction of both of these.

Adverts were consequently formulated which requested that anyone meeting these requirements, and who was interested in helping me to explore the experiences of parents who work from home, should contact me; the further stipulations were that they were happy for me to come in to their homes to interview them, and did not mind this being recorded and used for the purposes of this research project and potentially for related dissemination. The adverts were placed in both professionally orientated publications (such as 'Professional Manager' and newsletters of The Chamber of Commerce and similar bodies) and on parenting websites (such as www.fathersdirect.com), so as to allow access to a broad audience of possible interviewees. I also asked a former employer to publicise my project to their teleworking personnel, and was able to directly contact some participants of past studies on home-based work which colleagues in Sheffield were involved in. So whilst I had rather specific requirements of my participants I also had a reasonably broad base from which to recruit. I furthermore used additional tactics such as offering vouchers for 'The Early Learning Centre' (a national chain of educational toy shops) to make participation more attractive to teleworking parents.

Sample size

Despite this concerted strategy, recruitment of participants was slow and did not result in me having a large pool of potential interviewees from which to pick and choose, rather I had to be proactive in continuing to diversify my recruitment strategy (as outlined above) and approach individual teleworkers myself to explain the project, its aims, what their contribution entailed, and the benefits of taking part. Then came the difficult issue of deciding when to stop collecting data – when is enough enough? – which of course is not an exact science. I stopped collecting data for this project when I had fourteen participants: seven men and seven women. Whilst I did not seek to achieve an even gender balance, I liked the symmetry of having equal numbers of men and women in order to address questions relating to gender, and believed that this might make the analysis easier. Two further factors guided my decision of when to stop collecting data. Firstly Glaser and Strauss's (1967) notion of theoretical saturation - when repetition occurs if there is too much data – and I was indeed beginning to hear similar ways of talking about doing parenting and professionalism in telework from the participants. Secondly, as Gill (2000, p180) points out discourse analysis 'is a craft skill that can be difficult and is always labour intensive' – in other words discourse analysis is not an easy option for researchers and having too many participants can detract from the quality of the analysis. In order to become immersed in the data and extremely familiar with all of the participants, as is required for a good discourse analysis to take place, I realised that I had to limit the size of the sample. The transcription alone, which I had been doing as I went along, had been taking up a large amount of time (I did this myself to achieved maximum familiarity with the data and maintain control over how the transcripts were presented). I felt that any larger sample would have impaired my ability to achieve the deep knowledge of the data which was essential to the success of the project. If the aim of my study was to be able to make generalisable claims about how telework is experienced by different groups of people I may have seen a need to continue collecting data until I had several participants who might fit into different categories (ie. those with young children, those with older children; those who work from home full time, those who work from home for only part of their working hours, etc.) but again I stress that this simply is not this aim of the present study, which

is instead seeking to engage deeply with a number of sample of cases to in order to explore these individuals' specific experiences as mothers and fathers engaging in this mode of work.

Using video as a data collection tool

Above I have talked about transcribing the spoken elements of the interviews, therefore have already hinted that I used some kind of recording device in the interviews, however what I have not yet been explicit about is that for this I used a video camera, as opposed to simple voice recording technology. Here I discuss why I initially wanted to use a video camera as a data collection instrument and also why this side of the data subsequently has **not** been analysed and used in this volume.

I am attracted by the Foucauldian notion that discourse has a highly materialistic conception (see Reed, 1998). As Iedema (2007, p933) comments, discourse is 'equally realised across a variety of forms' including linguistic and rhetorical as well as physical and material. This seems sensible to me, as the messages we hear about how to live our lives are unlikely to only be reflected in language use, but are also likely to be seen in things like our bodily comportment, use of space and gesture, the practices we engage in (including our professional occupation and parenting), as well as in the various choices we make, for example about consumption: dress, gadgetry and the creation of a space we call 'home'; and all of these can be glimpsed through the multi-modal 'texts' that we in turn produce. Reed (1998) claims that Foucault would furthermore stress that these elements should be neither isolated nor prioritised. In theory I agree that these elements are surely inter-related in a messy and complex manner, yet in order to operationalise an analysis, as part of a piece of research, I feel that a (somewhat false) division of these elements is indeed necessary. It would be an overly ambitious and time-consuming task to attend to all of these at once. And whilst I would not seek to prioritise the import of any one of these factors over any other, it is the analysis of spoken forms for which there is more far more abundant guidance in the methods literature, and so this has been the key focus of the current project (that is not to say that I will not return to examine the visually realised elements at some time in the future). I

also had difficulty in finding a suitable way to analyse this side of the data – as Strangleman (2004) proposes in organisational studies we seem to suffer from a ‘visual illiteracy’ or simply do not recognise the value of this potential data. Semiotics certainly seems to hold some promise as a possible means of understanding this side of the data (see Chandler, 2004, for an introductory text) but after much reflection and discussion with my supervisors I have concluded that the quality of the spoken data alone provides enough of a focus for this volume.

Whilst the decision was taken not to use the visual data here, undoubtedly being able to watch the interviews again, as opposed to simply listening again, or reading the words of the participants from the pages of their transcripts, is likely to have influenced my relationship with, and analysis of, the data. I also have what seems to be a benefit in terms of being able to present a visual representation (a basic head shot) of each participant to the reader, as I do at the beginning of the following chapter (though it is fair to say that these might easily have been obtained using a stills camera). Readers of this thesis thus far have commented that being able to put a face to the words on the page ‘brings to life’ the participants and this further suggests that this visual data is worth pursuing at a later date. This does of course though raise the issue of anonymity, which some researchers go to great lengths to maintain. I chose to employ a strategy of ‘informed consent’, describing where and how the participants words and images were likely to appear and allowing them the option to refuse their permission for any of these outlets (some for example were happy for me to use their words but not their visual image in any publication, including this thesis). I also gave them the option of having their first name changed, and will not publish their surnames. In this way I allowed the participants themselves to have some control over the chance of being recognised as having taken part in this study, which I felt was the most ethical way to resolve this tricky issue.

Conducting the analysis

As I outlined at the beginning of this chapter, discourse analysis is not one universally agreed upon method but instead requires the researcher to establish for themselves how best to collect and make sense of their data whilst remaining 'discourse aware'. Gill (2000, p177 and 180), amongst others, voices her concern that this means it is difficult to establish a 'how to' guide for discourse analysis. Yet ironically she does provide basic step by step instructions which one might follow (see fig. 3.1 below). Her guidance is, I assume, deliberately generic (see step 6 which is headlined simply as 'analyse') to allow for different researchers to add their own particular specificities, for example in terms of how the actual analysis is to be conducted, yet she does stop frustratingly short of making any suggestion of how this might be achieved for those new to this method. Nevertheless her guide was a useful (though rather obvious, some may say common sense) checklist for me to refer to during the empirical research phase of this project.

1. Formulate your initial research questions
2. Choose the texts to be analysed
3. Transcribe the texts in detail
4. Sceptically read and interrogate the text
5. Code – as inclusively as possible. You may want to revise your research questions, as patterns in the text emerge
6. Analyse, a) examining regularity and variability in the data, and b) forming tentative hypotheses
7. Check reliability and validity through: a) deviant case analysis; b) participants' understanding (when appropriate); and c) analysis of coherence
8. Write up

Fig. 3.1 Steps in discourse analysis (Gill, 2000, p188-9)

Fairclough outlines a three-pronged approach to discourse analysis which is usefully summarised by Dick (2004). As an overview she describes how he

focuses on the analysis of discourse 'as text, as discursive practice, and as social practice' (p205). At the level of text the analysis can be seen as akin to traditional conversation analysis, where the researcher seeks to identify (as summarised by Dick, 2004, p205) how a text is constructed, 'what the text is trying to achieve', 'how the text achieves its aims', 'what words and phrases are used and what propositions... are being made'. At the level of discursive practice the analysis is very much concerned with 'the context of text production' (Dick, 2004, p205), for example who is involved – both in the production and as a potential consumer of the text - and what is its setting: geographically, historically and socially. As Dick (ibid) proposes this 'enables the analyst to infer the types of interpretation that might be made of the text' by its intended audience. At the level of social practice the researcher explores the text for examples of dominant discourses – which aligns with the definition of discourse which I created earlier in this chapter – these can be glimpsed through the propositions made by the parties involved in the text production, which suggest these have achieved hegemonic status as examples of taken for granted truths about how the world is or should be.

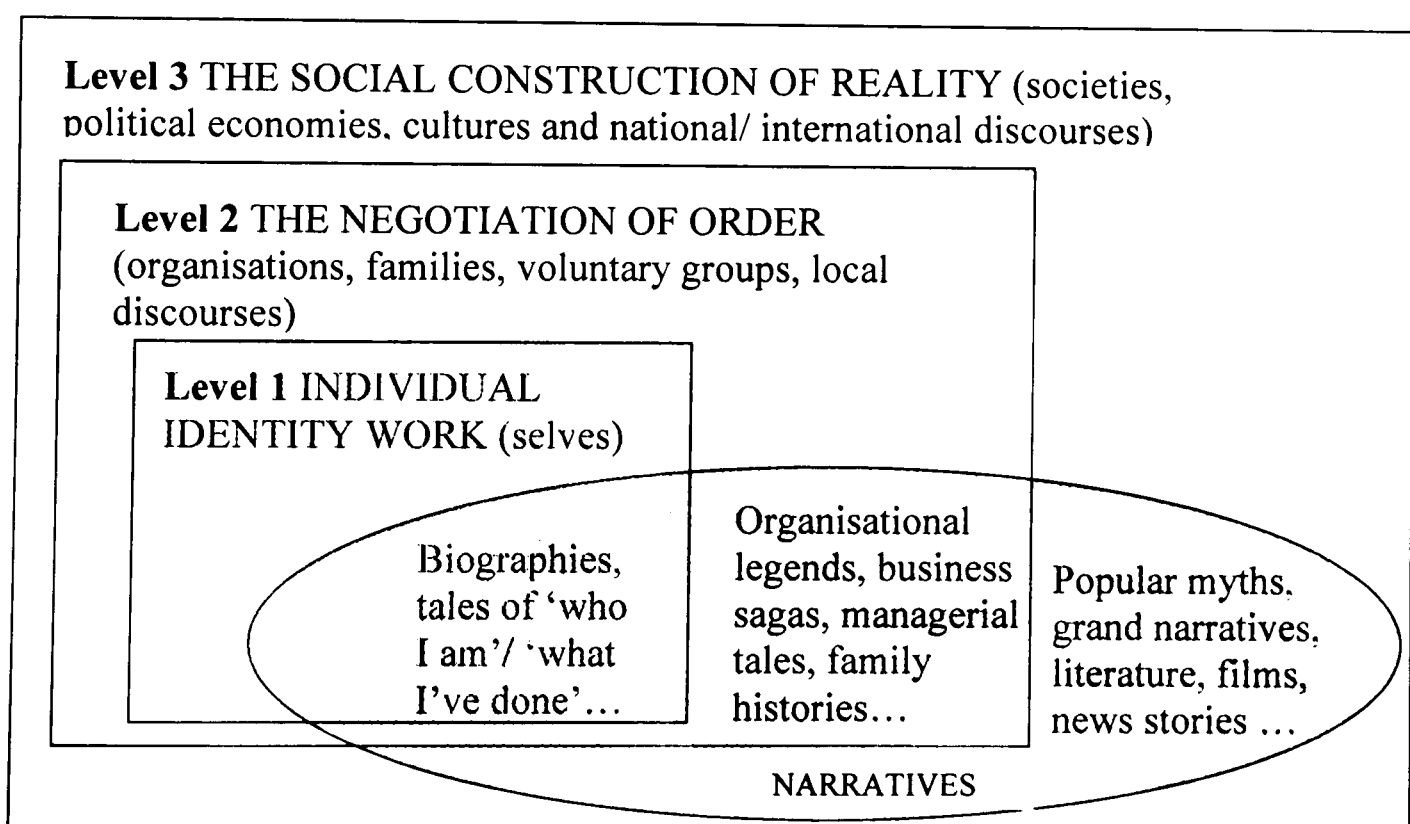


Fig 3.2. 'Narratives at three levels of social life'

Watson (2008, p6)

Watson (2008, p1) applauds the concept of discourse as 'an invaluable addition to the analytical apparatus' available to organisational researchers and

outlines his own approach to discourse analysis which involves reading the data whilst maintaining an awareness of three different levels of social life (see fig. 3.2 above). Watson (ibid) describes his model as 'an analytical framework designed to link pieces of language-in-use to structural/cultural patterns at the two 'higher' levels of the 'negotiation of order' and the 'social construction of reality' and stresses that the levels and concepts within these are simply analytical devices. His aim in producing this model was to give pragmatic form to his calls for researchers to remain language sensitive but also maintain awareness of the broader social structures which combine to create social life and our identities within it.

It seems to me that both Watson and Fairclough focus on three main points in their analysis (though they label these differently):

1. The text itself as an example language in use;
2. The immediate context: the form and situation of production of the text
3. The wider social context: in particular this level tries to locate the micro form of the text (or parts of the text) within broader macro level social discourses

In a very recent addition to discourse approaches, Clarke et al (2008) suggest a 'Discourse-Historical (D-H) Approach to Critical Discourse Analysis', which, like those approaches described above works 'through the triangulation of micro-level discursive strategies with macro-level historical sources and background knowledge on the social and political fields'. Clarke et al (2008) propose a turn from levels of analysis to what they call 'Orders of Context' but I am not persuaded that this is any more than an arbitrary change of rhetoric. They suggest four levels, the first three roughly align with those above, as suggested by their predecessors, and the fourth is 'Extra-linguistic social/sociological variables'. This is the additional knowledge that the researcher has about the participant which might provide a richer contextualisation. In the case which Clarke et al (2008) describe in their article, this includes background information gleaned from ethnographical observations for example about the culture of the organisation and additional interview data from the participants collected over a period of time. Whilst it is useful to acknowledge these factors in an analysis I

am not convinced that this amounts to a fourth level or 'order of context', rather this, to me, simply expands the scope of level two as labelled above.

Whilst acknowledging these suggestions from other discourse analysts and drawing from them in some respects I was not pedantic in following any one theorist's own specific methodology to the exacting letter – rather I used these as loose guidance whilst I took an intuitive and idiosyncratic approach of my own making, which I hope still allows for insightful social commentary. The three levels of the text; the immediate context; and the wider social context, are all given attention in my approach, though, as I am not a linguist, I admit I was rather daunted by the in depth technical analysis of the 'nitty-gritty' of the text itself, which some see as essential, indeed I saw little need for systematically breaking this down into its various linguistic components. Some might feel that this results in a lack of rigour, for which I have little defence other than that this does not seem to have detracted from the quality of my analysis. My approach might be described, as in Clarke et al's (2008) case, as 'a triangulation' between the micro level of the text itself (level 1) and the meta level discourses (level 3) which might have informed it (and therefore might be reproduced through it), whilst also examining a range of contextual factors (level 2) which could explain **why** the text produced is as it is. I now describe my own approach in detail below.

Gill (2000, p178) claims that analysis begins with the transcription of the interviews. I dispute this and suggest that even during the interviews themselves a rudimentary level of analysis might be occurring - or certainly might take place as the researcher reflects upon the interview immediately afterwards – and it is therefore important to capture this in detailed field notes written at this time. Most discourse analysts would agree that for an effective discourse analysis to take place immersion in the data is essential. For me, this meant watching the videos of the interviews and reading the transcripts again and again to ensure as total familiarity with the data as was possible. I engaged in coding, compiling, and categorising the male and female participants' talk about career and about parenting: on each transcript I highlighted, then cut and paste into new documents, talk specifically about career and specifically about parenting, opting, as it seemed sensible, to further break this down, both by

gender, and also into talk about career or parenting within telework and talk about career or parenting more generally (this is reflected in the structure of the following chapter, where my findings are presented). Each snippet was then categorised according to the strength of affiliation the speaker seemed to be trying to achieve to the relevant domain (for example whether their talk about career suggested that this was a priority role for them and likewise in relation to parenting).

In terms of identifying the discourses, I took a 'pre-emptive' approach by identifying those suggested by the literature about how men and women might construct themselves as parents and as professionals in telework (as presented in chapter two). Examples include 'traditional motherhood'; being a 'new man'; striving for 'work life balance'. It is also fair to say that these discourses were culturally available to me already as a social actor in my own right, experiencing family life and career for myself. I therefore brought these discourses to the data: 'a priori'. The key aim of the analysis therefore was to consider **who** drew upon these dominant discourses, **how** they used them, and **why** this might be. In order to examine 'who', I was able to scan the data for direct or indirect mentions of each discourse (and thereby honed the list of relevant discourses through this process); in order to examine 'how', I considered the ways in which these discourses were referred to – were the participants using these to describe themselves or to construct themselves in opposition to these? And additionally did the participants seem to understand each discourse in the same way as the literature presented them? In terms of 'why' each discourse was used in the way that it was by each participant – my exploration here can of course only ever be speculative and a subjective reading of the aims of each text – this required a broader look at the social and material situation of each participant to help to understand why, for example, a female participant might have opted to describe herself as career centric rather than as '*just a normal housewife*' (as another female participant does). This is where the biographical data, collected mainly through the participant summary sheets, came in most useful. This enabled each text to be considered 'in context'. Having a visual record as well as my own detailed field notes also supplemented this contextualisation, but I acknowledge that no researcher can ever claim to be able to access and understand the myriad factors which might be pertinent -

they can only provide a careful and grounded consideration of those which are more easily identifiable. As Fairclough suggests 'we should assume that no analysis of a text can tell us all there is to be said about it – there is no such thing as a complete and definitive analysis of a text' (2003, p14).

In sum if I were to provide an overview of how I analysed the texts collected, so that another researcher might be able to replicate this in their own study (though I am not necessarily recommending this here), my instructions would be as follows:

1. In order to conduct an 'a priori' discourse analysis of a text the relevant literatures should first be carefully consulted and reviewed in detail to identify a range of dominant discourses which might be expected to occur in the talk of people about a particular topic in a given context. The researcher should also list any relevant discourses that they themselves are aware of from their own exposure to such topics
2. Once this list has been created, along with detailed descriptions of the dominant understanding of each discourse, the data should be thoroughly interrogated for direct or indirect mention of these. The list might then be whittled down – or indeed might be added to, by the occurrence of further discourses in the data, which were not initially anticipated – which the researcher must remain open to
3. The researcher should then ask: **who** has utilised these discourses? – is there any kind of pattern of usage in terms of gender, age or any other pertinent factor?
4. Next they should ask for each occurrence: **how** has the discourse been used by the participant? Are they trying to embody or concur with this discourse? Are they challenging it by setting themselves up as bucking the trend? Do they subvert usual understandings of the discourse or try to imprint their own?

5. Finally the researcher must take into account the whole of each text (interview transcript or video) and other data available concerning each participant (for example field notes and biographical details) in order to contextualise the ways in which these dominant discourses have been used by the individual in question, in order to explore **why** this might have been the case

These analytical guidelines allow for the testing of whether those dominant discourses suggested by the literature and / or which are prevalent in the public arena really hold true in the lived experiences of those people involved in a particular domain of life, for example in a specific mode of work. I hope that here I have managed to explain in relatively plain English the method I developed and employed – which, through my review of the existing literature, appears to be something of a rarity in discourse analytic approaches (Dick's treatment of Fairclough's approach (2004) is another exception).

In the following section I present an example of the analysis technique I developed in action. First though, to summarise, it has been my contention that identity is a person's self-understanding (see the discussion of identity in the previous chapter) and as identity might be understood as the narrative account that a person gives of their self, I have therefore been strongly guided towards using a language-based methodology ie. interviews in order to best 'capture' this. I also propose that identity consists of various roles eg. the parental and professional, and that in order to create an identity within the parental role, for example, one has access to a variety of (often competing) discourses, for example of breadwinning and of involved parenthood. A key theme of my study is that certain discourses seem to be more accessible to certain individuals than to others, and I propose that a person's place in society is a key factor in determining access to certain discourses and therefore modes of being; I was therefore drawn to CDA, which focuses on issues of knowledge and power. The analysis technique I developed is geared towards exploring the content of interviews as situated within specific micro and macro contexts to rigorously exam who is appropriating, and indeed who is challenging, certain discourses, and allow for deliberation as to why this might be.

Example of analysis method

Step one

In order to conduct an 'a priori' discourse analysis of a text the relevant literatures should first be carefully consulted and reviewed in detail to identify a range of dominant discourses which might be expected to occur in the talk of people about a particular topic in a given context. The researcher should also list any relevant discourses that they themselves are aware of from their own exposure to such topics

My initial search for discourses which might be relevant to fathers in telework (I focus on fathers here as I present an example from a male participant) led me to the following list of possible discourses:

- Traditional Fatherhood (ie. Breadwinning, see Gerson in Arendell, 1997)
- 'New man' (ie. involved fatherhood, see Gerson in Arendell, 1997)
- Work life balance (ie. trying to balance work and family life, prevalent in the flexible work literature)
- Professional Go-getter (ie. prioritising their professional self, see careers literature)

Step 2

Once this list has been created, along with detailed descriptions of the dominant understanding of each discourse, the data should be thoroughly interrogated for direct or indirect mention of these. The list might then be whittled down – or indeed might be added to, by the occurrence of further discourses in the data, which were not initially anticipated – which the researcher must remain open to

I shall use the extract below from male participant Dan's transcript, as an example. This extract was colour coded, then cut and paste into a separate document as an example of the 'new man' discourse in use – an example of involved fatherhood.

Me - How would you categorise yourself, as a father firstly or as a consultant firstly?

Dan – Definitely as a father.

Me – And has working from home affected that, do you think?

Dan – Em. It's allowed me to be more of a father. But obviously as soon as you become a father and you get that bond with your child, then that's first and foremost.

Me – And has it changed how Harry [his son] sees you do you think?

Dan – Yeah, I think if he spent a lot of time without me then the bonds would be less firm, I think spending time with a child, certainly at the age Harry is, at 4 and a half, it's so important to spend quality time with them.

Step 3

*The researcher should then ask: **who** has utilised these discourses? – is there any kind of pattern of usage in terms of gender, age or any other pertinent factor?*

Next I examined Dan's details, in terms of his demographics and how he employs telework (see the following chapter for these details for all participants), and listed factors that might have been pertinent to his apparent choice to prioritise his parental self with me. I was then able to compare this list of factors to the other participants, both those who had also seemingly chosen to prioritise their parental selves, and those who had not. I found that such a comparison alone did not suggest anything significant (other than of course his gender – this discourse being unavailable to women).

Step 4

*Next they should ask for each occurrence: **how** has the discourse been used by the participant? Are they trying to embody or concur with this discourse? Are they challenging it by setting themselves up as bucking the trend? Do they subvert usual understandings of the discourse or try to imprint their own?*

Dan's use of the 'new man' discourse does indeed show him seeking to embody the ideal of an involved father. He does not seem to be attempting to subvert the dominant meaning of this discourse as presented in the literature

but seems to be trying to demonstrate his concurrence with this discourse. It might also be said that he is constructing himself against images of traditional fatherhood. Dan promotes himself as '*more of a father*' because he teleworks, the inference being that a traditional, office-based, father might be absent from the home, unable to spend time with his children, and therefore oppositionally might be considered as '*less of a father*'.

Step 5

*Finally the researcher must take into account the whole of each text (interview transcript or video) and other data available concerning each participant (for example field notes and biographical details) in order to contextualise the ways in which these dominant discourses have been used by the individual in question, in order to explore **why** this might have been the case*

This is of course down to my subjective interpretation! However on examining the above quote in the context of the full interview transcript and drawing on my memory of the interview (aided by my field notes), it seems to me that Dan's status as a single parent is one possible reason why he might have prioritised his parental self, another is his affiliation to a father's rights group. Interestingly in Dan's case he does not downplay his commitment to his career, so I ruled out the interpretation (which I suggest for another male participant) that he prioritised his parental identity having found his professional role unsatisfactory.

Chapter conclusions

In this chapter I have discussed the philosophy which informed my research, as well as the methods which I used to collect and analyse the data, which I brought to life, above, in an example of analysis based on some of the actual data collected. I have explicitly discussed my epistemological standpoint and how I tackled some of the trickier ethical dilemmas which I faced in the course of this project. Ultimately, evaluation of whether the philosophy and methodology behind this project have been successful, would be fruitless at this stage, as this will not be evident until the all of the findings have been presented (see the next chapter) and discussed (see the chapter after that), and I have had the chance to reflect upon (and indeed hear other people's comments

about) how effectively these have addressed the questions set, which I shall attend to in the concluding chapter.

Chapter 4 - Findings of Empirical Research

Introduction

Chapter two of this thesis provides an overview of existing literature on the topics of telework, identity, gender, parenting, and career. This has generated three specific research questions, which seek to address gaps in current knowledge by tying together these issues:

- **How does home-based telework interact with the reproduction of gendered parental and professional identities?**
- **What identity work is required by parents in home-based telework?**
- **What are the identity-related costs / rewards for parents in home-based telework?**




Chapter three outlines the methodology I employed to address these questions and in Chapter four the data collected using these methods is now presented. This current chapter, then, can be seen as a key stage of my thesis, as it moves away from the theoretical and into the empirical realm. Here the actual words, which the sample group of home-based teleworkers use to describe their experiences as parents and as professionals, are presented. I will go on, in the following chapter, to discuss this data in relation to the existing literature and provide a broad discussion which will begin to address the research questions above. Each specific question will then be formally answered in the final chapter, where I will also outline the key original contributions of this project.

In the present chapter I draw upon the data collected from two streams:

- The participant summary sheets (see appendix 2)
- And talk as data, taken from the verbatim interview transcripts (see appendix 4)

To begin, for the first time in this thesis, I introduce the participants and initially this is as individuals. I provide a brief biographical background for each person, along with an image taken from their videotaped interviews, showing head and shoulders (where permission has been granted). These images are provided simply to allow the reader to picture the participants as they read about their lives. Next I present data in tables to allow for comparisons to be made between the participants, and subsequently draw out some key points which I summarise in a series of bullet-pointed lists to provide a clear overview of the sample group, including demographic issues, some initial data about how and why they use home-based telework, and who conducts the domestic work and childcare in their homes. I then present an extensive but targeted selection of the verbal data collected, as I explore how my participants construct parental and professional identities with me, through their talk, in the context of their interviews. In particular I ask whether, and indeed how, participants prioritise their parental or professional selves. I will also, of course, consider how telework seems to have impacted upon these constructions.

The Individual Participants

<p>(permission to use image not given)</p>	<p>Barbara</p> <p>Barbara is 49 years old. She works as an Inclusion Co-ordinator for a charity supporting adults with learning disabilities. She has 3 children, aged 5, 7, and 9 and a husband who is a shift worker. Barbara has worked from home for 4 years and is at home for 2-3 days each week.</p>
 <p>Fig 4.1. DM Still</p>	<p>Dan</p> <p>Dan is 34. He is an IT Network and Security Consultant. He is a single father to his 4 and a half-year-old son and supports a national father's rights campaigning organisation. He has worked from home for 2 years and spends between 50% and 70% of his working hours at home.</p>
 <p>Fig 4.2. GM Still</p>	<p>Gary</p> <p>Gary is 36 and works as a Business Relations Manager. He is married to Kath (below) and together they have 2 children, aged 5 and 8. He has worked from home between 1 and 1 and a half years. He spends between 90% and 95% of his working hours at home.</p>
 <p>Fig 4.3. KF Still</p>	<p>Kath</p> <p>Kath is 41 and is a European Resource Manager, working for the same organisation as her husband Gary (above). They have 2 children, aged 5 and 8. She has worked from home for 6 years on and off and is at home approximately half of her working hours.</p>

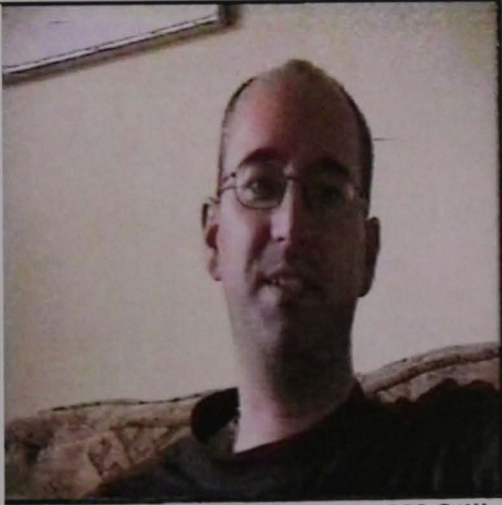

<p>(permission to use image not given)</p>	<p>Helen</p> <p>Helen is 32 and works part time as a Hydro-geologist. She is married to James (below) and together they have a son, aged 2, and at the time of the study were expecting another child. She has only been working from home for 2 months and this is for 50% of her working hours.</p>
<p>(permission to use image not given)</p>	<p>James</p> <p>James is 34 and a Chartered Electrical Engineer. His current job title is Director of Service Development. With his wife, Helen (above), he has a 2-year-old son and at the time of the study they were expecting another child. He has worked from home for 14 and a half months and this is for 50% of his working hours.</p>
 <p>Fig 4.4. AM Still</p>	<p>Adam</p> <p>Adam is 36 and is a self employed Market Researcher. He has 2 children, one aged 4 and one just 20 weeks old. He has worked from home for 18 months, which coincided with the setting up of his own business. He works from home between 3 and 5 days each week.</p>
 <p>Fig 4.5. MM Still</p>	<p>Magnus</p> <p>Magnus is 56. He is a self employed Management Consultant. He has 3 children who he currently lives with, 2 of who are of pre-school age. He also has grown up children from a previous marriage. He has worked from home for 4 years and is based there for 90% of his working hours.</p>



Fig 4.6. SM Still

Sam

Sam is 36 and is a Territory Project Co-ordinator, working for the same national organisation as Tina and Ken (both below). He has 2 children of school age. He has worked from home for 5 years and this is full time.

(permission to use image not given)

Tina

Tina is 44 and is a Solutions Manager for the same national organisation as Sam (above) and Ken (below). She has 2 children, one of whom is 11 years old and the other is away at University. She has worked from home for between 5 and 6 years and this is full time.

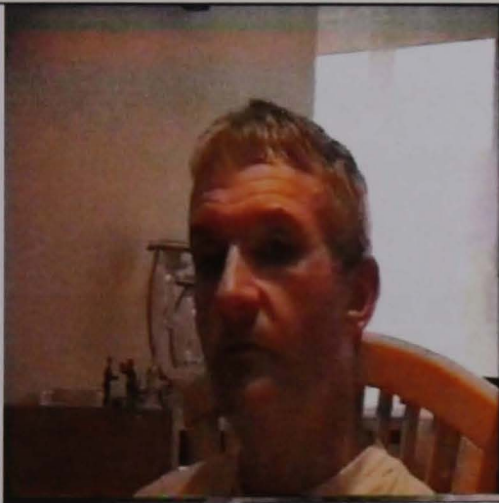


Fig 4.7. KM Still

Ken

Ken is 43 and works as a Computer Analyst for the same national organisation as Sam and Tina (both above). He has 2 children, aged 7 and 10. He has worked from home for 7 years and this is for 3 days per week.



Fig 4.8. AF Still

Anthea

Anthea is 38 and is a journalist, working as a sub-editor for a national business newspaper. She has 2 children, aged 3 and 5. She has worked from home for 3 and a half years. She works part time hours, which vary each week. She works from home for all of these hours.



Fig 4.9. SF Still

Sandra

Sandra is 46 and is a council tax recovery assistant, working in the same organisation and department as Ruby (below). She has 3 children, one of whom is away at University. She has worked from home for 7 months and this is full time.



Fig 4.10. RF Still

Ruby

Ruby is 37 and is a benefits officer for the same organisation as Sandra (above). She has 3 children. She has worked from home for 7 months and this is full time.

Now that the participants have been introduced as individuals, overleaf I summarise the biographical data presented above, as well as some additional relevant information, in table form, to provide an overview of the sample group. This will allow for comparisons to be made between individuals and for any themes to emerge. Some key points of interest are subsequently presented in the form of bullet-pointed lists. The aim of this first portion of the chapter is to enable the reader to familiarise themselves with the participants, and also to use this section as a reference point to remind themselves about the individuals who will be featured in the following sections, which go on to describe how they present themselves as parents and professionals in their interviews with me.

Please note that in Fig.4.13 I have only input data where this is directly reported by the participants. Where a box is left empty it does not necessarily mean that the relevant task is not performed by this person³.

³ This reflects a regrettable oversight in the data collection, which will be discussed later in the thesis

Overview of the Participants

Name and Code	Gender	Relationships to other participants	Other factors of flexibility	Age	Ethnicity	Occupation
Barbara BF	F	-	-	39	White / British	Inclusion Co-ordinator
Dan DM	M	-	-	34	White / British	IT Network and Security Consultant
Gary GM	M	Married to KF	-	36	White / British	Business Relations Manager
Kath KF	F	Married to GM	-	41	White / British	European Resource Manager
Helen HF	F	Married to JM	Part time Hours	32	White / British	Hydro-geologist
James JM	M	Married to HF	-	34	White / British	Chartered Electrical Engineer
Adam AM	M	-	Self Employed	36	White / British	Self Employed Researcher
Magnus MM	M	-	Self Employed	56	White / British	Management Consultant
Sam SM	M	Same org as TF and KM	-	36	White / British	Territory Project Coordinator
Tina TF	F	Same org as SM and KM	-	44	White / British	Solutions Manager
Ken KM	M	Same org as SM and TF	-	43	White / British	Computer Analyst
Anthea AF	F	-	Part time hours	38	White / British	Journalist
Sandra SF	F	Same org as RF	Uses flexi-time	46	White / British	Council Tax Recovery Assistant
Ruby RF	F	Same org as SF	Uses flexi-time	37	White / British	Benefits Officer

Fig 4.11. Table showing participant's biographical information

Name	Children and Ages	Length of time teleworked	Who instigated	Time spent working at home
Barbara	3 Ages 5, 7, 9	4 yrs	Mutual - new role	2-3 days per week
Dan	1 Age 4.5	2 yrs	Participant	50-70%
Gary	2 Ages 5 and 8	1-1.5 yrs	Participant	90-95%
Kath	2 Ages 5 and 8	6 yrs (on and off)	Participant	50%
Helen	1 Age 2 (plus expecting)	2 months	Employer – local office closure	50%
James	1 Age 2 (plus expecting)	14.5 months	Mutual - new role	50%
Adam	2 Ages 4 and 20 weeks	18 months	Participant –became self-employed	3-5 days per week
Magnus	3 (ages not given)	4 yrs	Participant –became self-employed	90%
Sam	2 Ages 4 and 3	5 yrs	Participant	100%
Tina	2 Ages 18 and 14	5-6 yrs	Mutual - new role	100%
Ken	2 Ages 7 and 10	7 yrs	Participant	3 days per week
Anthea	2 Ages 3 and 5	3.5 yrs	Participant	100%
Sandra	3 (ages not given)	7 months	Employer – pilot trial	100%
Ruby	3 Ages 14, 9 and 7	7 months	Employer – Pilot trial	100%

Fig 4.12: Table showing further Information about participants

	Reported level of involvement in domestic work			Reported level of involvement in childcare		
	Participant	Spouse	Other	Participant	Spouse	Other
Barbara		Does 50%	Aunt employed as cleaner			Nanny
Dan	50%	N/a	Au Pair does 50%		N/a (single parent)	Au Pair
Gary			Ironer and cleaner			Nanny and friend do school runs
Kath		Shops on line and can unpack during day	Ironer and cleaner			Nanny then private school. Friend does school runs
Helen	Shared 'equitably', not necessarily 50/50		Weekly cleaner	Majority	Used to do some nursery runs	Used to use nursery and parents
James	Roughly 50/50 when not working away		Weekly cleaner	Used to do some nursery runs		Used to use nursery and parents
Adam		Does 'the lion's share'		Does some nursery runs	Full time Mum	
Magnus	Does some 'outdoor' tasks	Does most		(did more when wife worked part time)	Full time Mum	

Sam	50%	50%			Full time Mum	
Tina		All cooking	Pays son to clean once a week	Reports children as being old enough to look after selves		
Ken	50%	50%		Does school runs 3 days	School runs 2 days when not working part time	
Anthea	Clears up between school run and work			Virtually all		
Sandra	Virtually all	'bits'	Family do 'bits'	Gets son ready for school		(Mother used to help out)
Ruby	Share washing pots		Cleaner does virtually all		Does school run everyday	

Fig 4.13. Table showing participants reported involvement in domestic work and childcare

Summary

Figures 4.1-13 offer an overview of the sample group. The participants are presented above in the order in which I interviewed them but further to that are not 'ranked' in any way. Some notable features of the group - in terms of demographics, family circumstances, domestic arrangements, employment characteristics, and details and decisions about telework - are now summarised below.

Demographic Overview

- There is an even gender balance in the sample group: 7 men and 7 women (as illustrated in fig.4.14 below)
- Included in the group are 2 married couples
- The age range of the group is 32 to 56
- All participants describe themselves as white / British

	Actual Number	%
Female Participants	7	50
Male Participants	7	50
Total Participants	14	100

Fig 4.14. Table showing participants by gender

Family Circumstances

- Participants all report having between 1 and 3 children
- Of the children whose ages are mentioned there appears to be a wide range of between 20 weeks and 18 years
- At the time of this study all of the participants live with their husbands or wives, apart from one who is a single father without a partner
- One participant has grownup children from a previous marriage in addition to the children he now lives with from his second marriage

Domestic Arrangements

- 4 out of the 7 women and 3 out of the 7 men employ people to perform domestic work in their homes (and in addition Tina pays her son to clean)
- 2 out of the 7 women and 2 out of the 7 men report currently employing childcare workers / services
- In 2 of the families it is reported that extended family members used to be involved in childcare (in one instance this has ceased due to the age of the children and in the other it has ceased as the mother is currently on maternity leave)
- 2 of the men state that their wives do the most domestic work, with others putting it in the region of 50/50
- 3 of the men have wives who are 'full time Mums', ie. they are not in paid employment
- None of the men in my sample claim to do the most domestic work in their homes

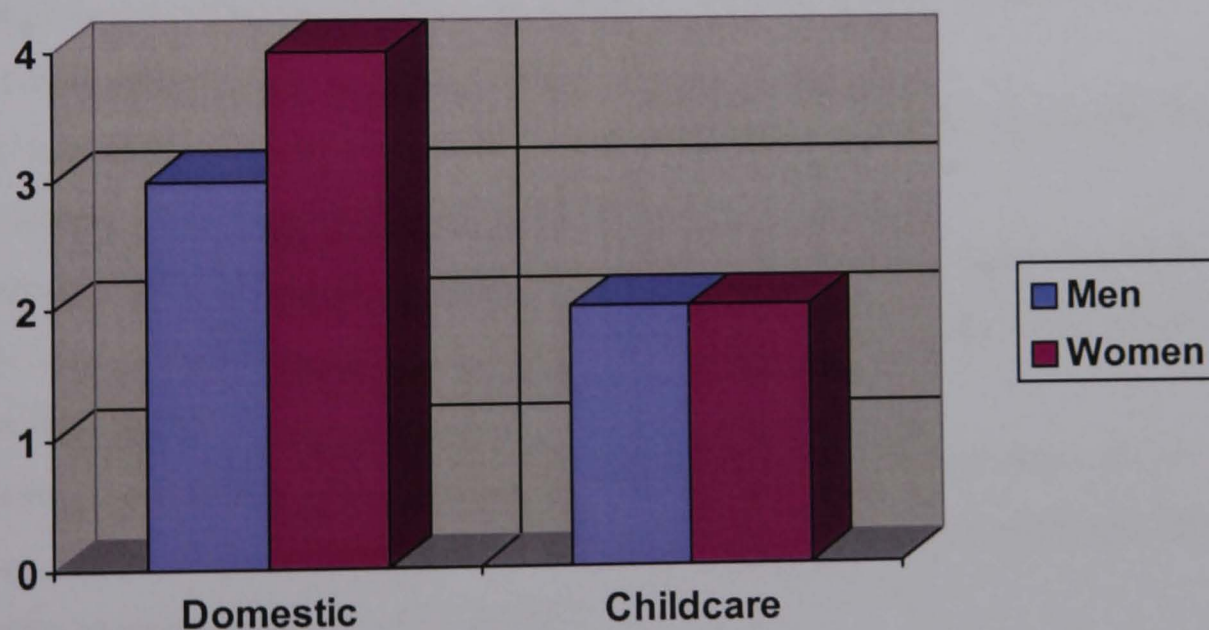


Fig 4.15. Graph showing employment of paid childcare / domestic workers

Employment Details

- A variety of occupations are represented – with technical and managerial roles most prevalent

- 5 of the participants work in just 2 organisations (3 in one and 2 in another), the others all work in a variety of different organisations
- 2 of the group are self-employed
- 2 mention that they employ flexitime
- 2 work part time (both of these are women)

Telework: Details and Decisions

- The participants report having worked from home for between 2 months and 7 years
- 5 of the participants state that they work from home for all of their working hours, not having a desk in a traditional office at all
- Overall half of the participants work from home for 90 – 100% of their working hours
- The remaining half all work from home for at least 50% of their working hours
- 8 of the participants reported that they chose to work from home themselves (either by requesting this from their employer or as part of a move to self employment – see fig. 4.16)
- On 3 occasions a mutual decision to telework was reported to have been made between employer and employee
- 2 participants began teleworking as part of trial offered by their employer (the same organisation) and both subsequently chose to continue when the trial ended
- Only 1 participant states that the choice to work from home was not her own, but was due to the closure of a local office, the alternative therefore being moving house or redundancy

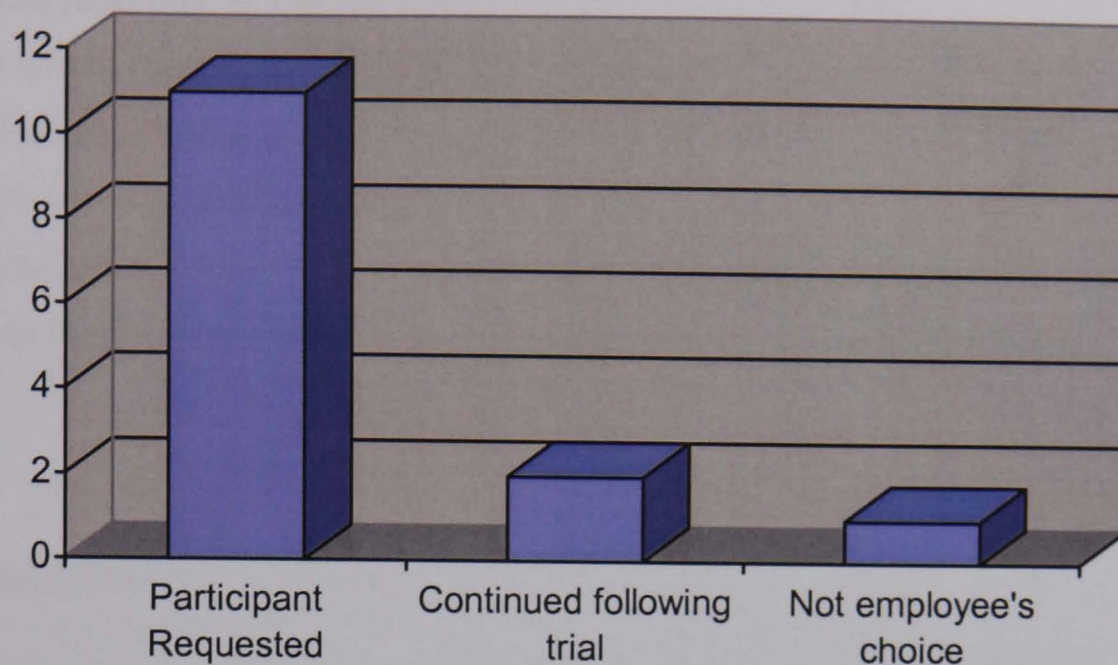


Fig 4.16. Graph showing who instigated telework

Telework and Identity

In this section I present my identity-related findings by drawing upon the words of the teleworkers I interviewed. First of all I provide an overview of which role, whether parental or professional, each participant seems to prioritise with me. I then move on to explicitly consider how the participants construct their parental and professional identity in their talk with me, and, as these roles can be said to be gendered, I present the data from the women and men's interviews separately. I also distinguish here between how the participants discuss these roles generally, and how they describe these roles in the context of home-based telework, in order to see how this mode of work interplays with the reproduction of these roles. A further distinction between the types of data presented, is that some quotes aim to directly show identity work (in other words these participants' self-understanding in these roles) whereas others are simply their descriptions of their activities in these roles, which I believe provides useful background detail⁴.

It is necessary here to provide a brief note about how the data has been coded for the purposes of presentation in this chapter. Quotes taken directly from the interviews will be in italics and followed by a code. This code consists of the participant's first name initial; plus an F or M to distinguish between female and

⁴ This distinction is signposted in the commentary provided

male participants (see figs. 4.1 to 4.11 for each participant's individual code); then a number which represents the line in the interview transcript where the quote begins. For example a quote followed by the code **HF23** is from Helen's interview (a female participant), beginning at line **23** of her transcript. Readers should also note that in exchanges between the interviewee and interviewer, 'me' represents myself, as I conducted all of the interviews myself as well as writing this document.

Prioritising Identities

As I describe in chapter three, one of the early steps I took in analysing the data collected from the interviews was to attempt to see whether the women do indeed prioritise the parental sides of their identity, and the men, their professional sides, which is what the literature has led me to assume might be the case. This in itself was problematic. I found the narratives produced, on occasion, to be ambiguous and contradictory, like a sliding scale where the arrow is continually shifting. During the interviews I did ask the direct question '*would you class yourself as a parent or as a professional?*' but even where participants give an unequivocal answer here, they then often go on to present conflicting 'realities' at different stages in the interview. Having said that, there are a few cases where participants seem to make a concerted effort to present themselves firmly under the banner of either parent or professional. Whilst I acknowledge that this is a somewhat blunt instrument, based wholly on my subjective assessment of the function of these individuals' talk about themselves in the micro-context of their interviews with me⁵, I have found it useful to draw upon the following categories in my analysis, and as you will see in chapter five, I refine these further in my subsequent discussion of the findings:

- Those who prioritise the professional role
- Those who prioritise the parental role
- Those who do not prioritise either role

⁵ It is of course possible, indeed probable, that the interview context itself has shaped the identity performances of these men and women

The graph below (fig 4.17) illustrates a gender breakdown of where the 14 participants of my study seem to fit in relation to these criteria and the table (fig 4.18) shows each participants prioritised role (as I interpret it):

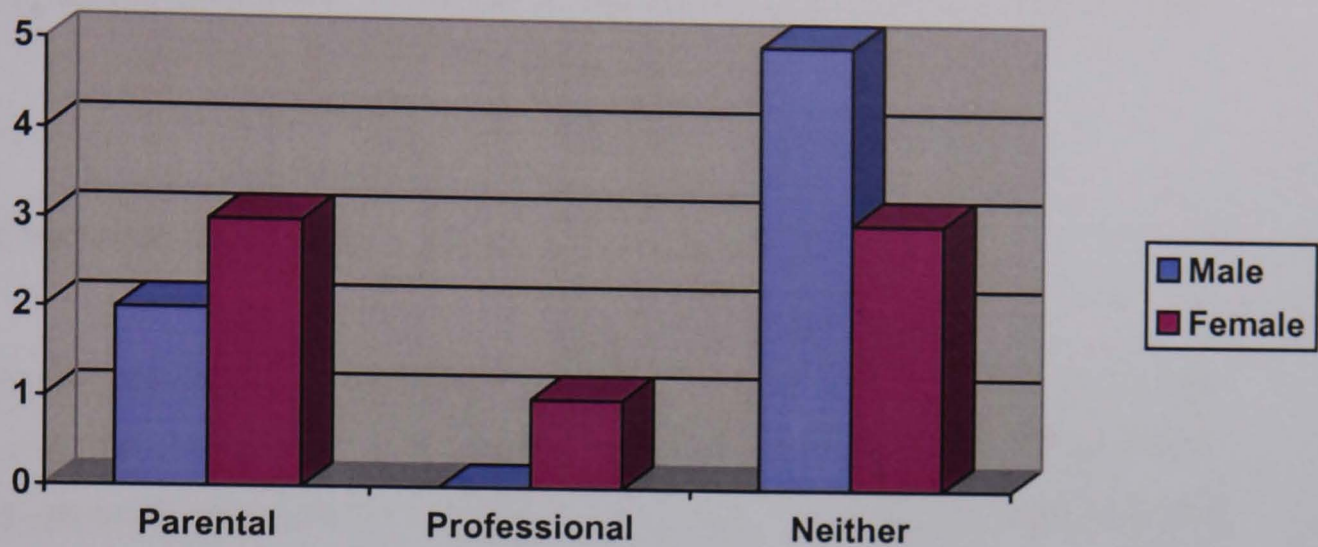


Fig 4.17. Graph showing prioritised role

In terms of individual participants' preferences, these are summarised as follows:

Name	Parental	Professional	Neither
Barbara			✓
Dan	✓		
Gary			✓
Kath		✓	
Helen			✓
James			✓
Adam	✓		
Magnus			✓
Sam			✓
Tina			✓
Ken			✓
Anthea	✓		
Sandra	✓		
Ruby	✓		

Fig 4.18. Table showing prioritised role

In the sections that follow I hope it will become clear why I have categorised each participant as I have above, as I present their own words about themselves as parents and as professionals. Appendix 3 also provides a truncated overview of this.

Women's parental identities

Contrary to the assumption raised by the literature reviewed in chapter two, only three out of the seven women interviewed, present an identity with a clear focus toward the parental role. These are Anthea (who works part time); and Ruby and Sandra (who perform the same kind of work, for the same organisation, and occupy the roles which seem to be the least in keeping with traditional ideas of professional work of all those in the sample). The quotes below typify the ways in which these women prioritise their parental roles in their talk with me:

Anthea - Family come first before my job and my career, and you don't realise that until they come along ... work pales into insignificance really, compared to your family, so they come first. So I am very family-focused. It dominates my thinking, everything, so that's the sort of parent I am **AF105**

Ruby - Your children become an extension of you really; you think more of them than you do of yourself, they come first always **RF137**

Sandra - I'm not really career minded; I'm just a normal housewife who's got a full time job, with a nice family **SF60**

Anthea, a journalist, also provides a description of how she responds to her family's needs in a practical sense, even when work requires her to be away from home:

Anthea - I would still organise everything around the kids, they'd go off to nursery, but I would get everything ready, I would ensure they were eating the right foods and so on and for when they came back from nursery everything

would be laid out for them, so all my husband had to do was ferry them there and back, so although they weren't with me all day on a couple of days a week then, I was still there in the background, even though I wasn't there physically **AF141**

Helen, a hydro-geologist, who, at the time of the interview, was heavily pregnant with her second child, does not seem to clearly prioritise either her parental or professional role with me. She does however highlight that she has made sacrifices in terms of adjusting her aims in life because she has children:

Helen - I'm happy with what I'm doing at the moment, because I have children, I would have very different aims if I didn't have children, so I'm happy with how things are going at the moment, and that's good enough really, right now **HF28**

Other female participants also seem to find expressing a clear focus on the parental role problematic. Tina, for example, who has worked from home on a full time basis for over five years, describes that the temporal division between work time and home time distinguishes which role she will prioritise:

Tina - When I'm on me holidays and out of working time, then firstly I'm a mother, if God forbid something happen to them or they were ill or they needed me in some way that nobody else would do, I don't mean picking them up from school, I mean if they broke an arm, a leg, or they're ill or whatever, then I'm a mother firstly, obviously. But generally, 8 while 5, 5 days a week, I'm a manager first, that's probably not what people want to hear **TF300**

By commenting that her focus on a professional role, at times, is not something that '*people want to hear*', she seems to be reflecting on the dominant ideology that women should prioritise their parental roles at all times. Later in her interview she provides a further reflection of a more traditional conception of motherhood, again seemingly placing herself in opposition to this:

Tina - I'm not a very good mother I don't think

Me -Why's that?

Tina – *Cos if I were busy and it were 3 o'clock, coming home from school time, and it were raining, I'll just think 'oh they'll get wet!' I don't think 'oh it's raining I'll have to go and fetch them'* TF84

This excerpt suggests an awareness of the idea that '*good mothers*' are those who do everything for their children (which is of course a matter for debate). Tina defies this notion but hints at a feeling of guilt for doing so. Feeling a sense of guilt about paid work taking one's focus away from motherhood (and indeed of family life distracting from paid work) was a theme present in many of the women's interviews, yet this notion was notably absent in four cases. Anthea, Ruby and Sandra, the three women who seem to prioritise their parental identities, do not express feelings of guilt – this is perhaps understandable, as they are following society's expectations and evident desires in their adoption of discourses of mothering. The fourth person who does not express feelings of guilt is Kath. She is the only participant (female or male) seen to clearly prioritise the professional role in their talk with me⁶. Kath's talk shows her working at being a certain type of parent, and suggests that she sees being a traditional mother as less important than other things, for example providing her children with access to a range of activities and holidays. She focuses on the benefits her work brings to her family in terms of providing material rewards and experiences for her children, as well as in providing a solid example of '*the work ethic*' (KF90). Kath also uses the term '*deliverables*' (KF92) – a piece of organisational jargon which she applies to talk about the family.

Barbara, a charity worker with three children, seems to prioritise neither the professional or parental role with me, but, like Kath, describes providing for her children in terms of giving them access to '*a wide range of experiences*'. Barbara however also expresses feeling '*guilty*' about working, particularly because her own mother stayed at home with her.

Barbara - *My Mum always stayed at home when we were young, and I always said that I would go to work cos I was never very maternal and sometimes I feel,*

⁶ As I shall show in following sections, this is most clearly demonstrated when I directly ask Kath whether she sees herself more as a parent or professional, and she refers to the latter (quote KF247)

sometimes you feel guilty about it but I think that overall I provide my children with a wide range of experiences **BF116**

Above Barbara comments that she was '*never very maternal*', which perhaps serves to further challenge the discourse which suggests that all women long to be mothers in order to find fulfilment. Below Tina, a mother of two, echoes these sentiments, albeit constructed as jest.

Tina - What have I learnt since becoming a parent? – If I had my time back again I wouldn't do it! **TF124**

Kath, who is married to one of the male teleworkers I interviewed, provides a description of her childcare arrangements (see KF67), which is a striking example of the complex collaborative approach that some families adopt. This sets her in opposition to ideas of mothers providing most of the childcare in families today, as she reveals the relatively low level of participation she has in parental work (compared to the other women in the sample group). The other female teleworkers I interviewed (and indeed the male) also report these kinds of arrangements - see fig. 4.13 for a full summary of respondents reported use of paid domestic and childcare services, but Kath's example is the most extreme. Perhaps this is due to her prioritisation of the professional role, which might require such arrangements to be in place.

In sum three out of seven of the women I interviewed seem to present their parental roles as prioritised over their professional role, and their talk reflects familiar discourses associated with motherhood, for example of the sacrificing of other possibilities. It is worth noting that these three women comprise one part time worker and the two people who performed what might be seen as the least professional of the jobs represented in the sample group. Out of all of the seven women I interviewed only one seems to prioritise her professional role, utilising what could be seen as a more masculine breadwinner discourse in order to do so. Those participants who do not clearly prioritise either role with me, still seem to reflect on some idealised notion of what a '*good mother*' should be, and these participants express guilt, perhaps at their perceived failure to achieve this ideal.

Women's parental identities in Home-based telework

Some of the men I interviewed articulate clear perceptions of how home-based telework might be particularly difficult for mothers. Sam, for example, who is a father of two and has worked from home for five years, comments:

Sam - I think that a mother may find it a bit harder to work from home, I can, although I have problems, I can still work from home, come into this room and think I'm at work, the balance - I can separate that easier than a mother working from home **SM426**

Sam - I think if a mother were at home she'd be trying to do more than she could actually do, I think she'd find it harder to balance **SM434**

And Magnus, the oldest participant I interviewed, adds:

Magnus - With the man there's a hidden expectation that he's the breadwinner and he ought to be left to get on with his job whether he's at home or... so on balance it would probably be more difficult for a woman **MM336**

It might be significant to note that both Sam and Magnus's wives are 'full time Mums', not engaged in paid employment. Anthea, one of the female interviewees, also describes her husband's pre-conceptions about telework, which are rather different to those above – he speculates that telework might actually allow women to 'have it all':

Me - What was his [her husband's] reaction?

Anthea – 'Wow, fantastic, if they'll let you work from home wouldn't that be brilliant? You manage to be the mum and have a career, bring all the money in as well' **AF164**

The responses from the women, about how telework actually affects their parenting-related activities, though, are generally positive. Barbara, an inclusion co-ordinator working for adults with learning disabilities, comments on having the flexibility to be more involved in her children's school activities:

Barbara - *Because I work from home I can take the kids to school, if I'm at home, so that's quite nice, I can sort of be flexible if they've got a school play or something, and go and see that* **BF285**

And Sandra, a local council employee, comments on the benefits for her children and her extended family as well – the reassurance of her simply 'being there':

Me – *Have your children said particular things [about you teleworking]?*

Sandra – *Em. I just think it's been nice for them cos they know that there's somebody here 24/7, not just for me children, but for me parents as well, cos me Mum's been in hospital this week, well last week, so I've been able to alternate the hours that I do and work around going to see me Mum and looking after her. But also the impact of being at home, with Lee [her son], when he comes home from school, it worked well with that. It's worked well with Sonia [her older daughter] coming home from university, I'm not always at work – I do work but she knows I'm here so we can still have a conversation so she's not feeling lonely, so yeah it works* **SF204**

A further benefit expressed by these women about home-based telework, in relation to their identities, is the increased visibility of other roles in their lives. See the examples below from Helen, whose husband, James, also teleworks and was interviewed for this project, and Anthea:

Helen - *I have a huge wealth of roles in life* **HF320**

Anthea - *I think it's important for them to know that I work and I'm not – when you say 'just a Mum' it sort of makes it sounds like that's not important and it is the most important thing – but for them to realise there's other sides to you* **AF224**

Anthea above states that motherhood is '*the most important thing*' and indeed she does consistently prioritise her parental role in her interview with me. Another participant who prioritises her role as a mother above her professional role, in her interview with me, is Ruby. In the excerpt below Ruby, a local council employee like Sandra, describes that telework has brought her parental role more into

focus. Here, once again, she seems to reflect popularist idealised notions of motherhood by stressing that this is *'how it should be'*:

Ruby - It becomes more morphed if you like, it's not two separate identities anymore really, you're not 'work Ruby' and 'home Mom', it sort of just combines the two, in fact I would say it probably you become more of a... you're a Mom more than a worker really, and the work sort of fits in around everything else you've got to do which as a parent myself I think that's how it should be really, you know the work should fit around your family **RF306**

Sandra, the third female participant to prioritise her parental role, also comments that working from home has allowed her to continue her domestic role around her work:

I run round with the Hoover in me dinner hour, wash bathroom round and things, strip beds in the morning, get it in the washer **SF74**

Of all the female participants, Helen, who has only been working from home for a couple of months, provides the most muted response when asked if telework could enable reconciliation of work and family life. A flexible working pattern, she concludes has more impact than the location of one's work.

Me - Do you think telework is an effective way for parents to reconcile work life and family life?

Helen – Em. No, not... that would depend so much on what people are doing and how their work works. If you're significantly more flexible about the hours you do your work in then there's an impact but really the fact that you're sitting at a desk at your home isn't really any different, not travelling to and from an office, is a time saving thing, but it's not an awful lot else so just, to answer that, it depends so much what the work pattern is **HF276**

So whilst some of the male participants suggest that women might experience telework negatively, the women themselves largely report it as a positive experience, in relation to their parental and domestic roles. All report being able to be more involved in parental and domestic activities; some highlight that other

roles in their lives have become more visible. In terms of parental identities, one participant (Ruby) suggests that she now feels 'more of a mum' thanks to teleworking.

Men's parental identities

To remind the reader, two of the male participants (Dan and Adam) seem to prioritise their parental roles in their interviews, and none of the men clearly prioritise their professional role. The remaining five do not make an obvious priority of either role in their talk with me. As might have been expected, some of the male participants describe their parenting roles in terms of a responsibility to provide financially for their families. Gary, Kath's husband, employs the classic term '*breadwinner*', but also comments that the tying of this construction to the male parent is something that one can choose whether or not to '*believe in*', perhaps hinting that women are now breadwinners too (this suggestion is also evident in the talk of his wife Kath as we saw above):

Gary - There's still a need, whether you believe in the man as the breadwinner or not, to bring in as much money as possible to look after the family. So I want to have a career that I enjoy and that I think rewards well. GM50

Whilst Gary and Sam, who each have two school-aged children, both fail to prioritise either the parental or professional role in their interviews, their talk about parenting is markedly different. Gary, a Business Relations Manager, talks above about the key aim of a breadwinner, which he seems to interpret as '*to bring in as much money as possible*'. Sam, who is a project co-ordinator, on the other hand, describes below turning down the promise of more money in favour of being around more for his children, and finding a '*balance*' between his professional and parental role:

Sam - I was offered a job near York, very well paid, extremely, you know more money than I'm on, you know good car, good career progression for me, it meant leaving the company but it was good, so yeah, you get to see people, you're on more money, you get a BMW and everything - but I turned it down, because, you

know, although I'm very ambitious and want to get on, that meant getting up, leaving home at 7 o'clock in the morning, getting home when the kids have gone to bed at 7 o'clock, 8 o'clock at night, so that's when the balance kicks in **SM368**

Some of the male participants also present a traditional image of fathers as 'helpers' of mothers, rather than as parents in their own right. Quotes on this theme below are from James, who is Helen's husband and father to their two year old, and from Sam:

James - I try to be helpful in terms of nappy changing, starting the lunch **JM109**

Sam - I'm Dad who does all the playing and messing around whereas Mum does the domestics **SM113**

Ken, who works for the same national organisation as Sam, conversely describes his parental activities, which suggest he is very much as a 'hands on' parent. Magnus, a self-employed Management Consultant, in his description of his parenting activities, is the only male participant to express the idea that life is easier when women are the ones to make sacrifices in order to accommodate childcare:

Magnus - What does cause a bit of friction is the times when Diane [his wife] has been working part time and the kids are on holiday or whatever, when we've got to juggle looking after the kids, her going to work, and me going to a meeting in Germany, there's sometimes clashes and it's unreasonable of me to expect her to take the day off work for no reason, but the kids need looking after, but I also need to be in Germany as well, so it's just a bit awkward, so it's a lot easier from a management or managing the situation perspective if Diane isn't working **MM299**

Whilst he proposes that this might be seen as '*unreasonable*'⁷ he concludes that things are '*awkward*' when his wife engages in paid work outside of the home. On the other hand, Adam, who has 2 children, one aged just 20 weeks, and Dan,

⁷ It is entirely feasible that this expression was prompted by Magnus's assumptions about MY values regarding modern parenthood

single father to his four-year-old son, make a clear priority of their parental identities in their talk with me:

Adam - *The family comes first and the work comes second, whether that's the right way to do it or not, it's just the right way for me* **AM256**

Me - *How would you categorise yourself firstly, as a father or as a researcher?*

Adam – (a quick response) *Father* **AM274**

Me - *How would you categorise yourself, as a father firstly or as a consultant firstly?*

Dan – *Definitely as a father* **DM253**

Me - *What have you learnt since becoming a parent?*

Dan – *Em, probably that it's the most important job that I'll ever do, whereas before being a parent, work was probably the biggest ambition I had, after having a child I wouldn't swap him for the world, now I put obviously family before work* **DM87**

As mentioned previously, none of the men make a clear priority of their professional roles in their talk with me but they do express views which show desires to be more involved with the parental role:

James - *I would probably desire to be involved, you know to be quite an involved father whatever the situation, I'd choose to manage my work around that* **JM537**

Ken - *I want my kids to have all the things that I didn't have when I was at home, I didn't see my parents, they were working all the time, I try and do as much as I possibly can with my kids really* **KM332**

And, contrary to received wisdom about fatherhood expressed in the literature reviewed earlier in this thesis, the men I interviewed express their parenting in terms of love and affection, as opposed to provision and detachment⁸:

⁸ Though yet again I cannot deny that the interactional context of the interview is likely to have shaped participants' responses

Dan - *You know he [his son] always wants his cuddles, he wants affection, and he gets it, he gets that off me in equal measure* **DM82**

James - *The extent of unconditional love that you can feel for a person... the complete commitment you can feel for this little person is extraordinary*
JM190

In sum, it might be expected that men, who are traditionally seen as 'breadwinners', will prioritise their careers, in order to maximise the financial contribution for their families. In my sample, however, none of the men clearly prioritise their professional role with me and one even reports turning down higher paid employment in the pursuit of a 'balance' between work and family life. Indeed two of the male participants seem to prioritise their parental selves with me and they, and others, employ sentimental language to describe their relationships with their children. Those men who do not currently prioritise their parental roles suggest that being more involved fathers is a desire for them. Only the oldest participant explicitly mentions women's traditional role as the primary child-carer, and he recognises that an expectation of this might be seen as unreasonable in the present day. Some of the male participants mention the traditional breadwinner discourse, but intriguingly have various interpretations of this, Gary for example suggests that he does not associate this idea solely with the male parent, and indeed his wife herself (Kath) seems to employ this discourse to describe her parental role.

Men's parental identities in Home-based telework

The overriding benefit of home-based telework expressed by the men I interviewed is that it facilitates their desires to be more involved parents, particularly through the flexibility it offers. From being there for 'everyday things':

Me - *What do you think the overall impact [of telework] has been on your family?*

Adam – *I think it's been quite positive, the amount of time that I've been able to spend with William [his son] compared with working full time, the amount of*

things we can do now, so long as I've not got anything particularly urgent on, I can take him to school, take him to nursery, pick him up again, if we wanted to go out for the day, if we need to go into town, if we need to go to the shopping centre, you know everyday things that you can do, that if you're in an office you just can't get to do, it just gives me so much more flexibility and the amount of time I can give to the family than if I was stuck in an office is something I would never want to give up now **AM215**

Me - What do you think the overall impact has been on your family life, of working from home?

Dan – I think it's been, obviously it's improved vastly, you get to see more of your child and hopefully Daddy won't be just someone who popped to work in the morning, and came home at night, tucked you in bed **DM185**

To being present for more 'special' occasions:

James - Tomorrow's Henry's [his son's] birthday, we're having a small birthday tea for family and people, and that starts at 4.30 so the great thing about that is I'll be able to work at least until 4 o'clock and knock off then and if there are any outstanding items, in fact, that's right, somebody was asking for a conference call tomorrow afternoon at 5 o'clock, with a customer, which obviously I've said I can't do, it's Henry's birthday but we are going to have a conference call at 7 o'clock tomorrow evening, so you know I can juggle that around **JM471**

One of the women in the sample group, Kath, also comments on the effect of having her husband, Gary, working from home upon her role in the family:

Kath – I think since Gary has started working from home my role in the family has changed, I think he shares a lot more of the child stuff, than he did before. **KF108**

Kath, who seems to prioritise her professional role, suggests that telework might allow men to understand family life more, which she describes as a positive thing:

Kath - *I think it might make them more understanding of what actually takes place in family life – I'm in a very fortunate position with Gary because he understands completely what it's like, but I think that's unusual even in this day and age, but I think it would probably make men more aware and understanding, and therefore should have a positive effect* **KF238**

Gary himself concludes that since starting to telework he feels 'more like a parent' **GM306**. Additionally, in the excerpt below, he describes that he now performs more childcare related activities:

Me - *Has your role in your family changed since teleworking?*

Gary – *I suspect that I collect, and do a lot more of the running around for the children than I did before because previously I've had roles all over the UK. The last one would have been an hour and a half's drive from here each way, so obviously if I'm an hour and a half away I can't just nip back and collect the kids if Kath's busy, she'll have to do it herself or ask a friend. So I suppose I have increased the amount of childcare I perform* **GM96**

Kath also describes her husband, Gary, unpacking the shopping whilst 'on a conference call', which suggests that working from home has facilitated an integration of domestic work and paid work, for men as well as women.

Me - *How about domestic work in the home, how's that shared?*

Kath – *We have a cleaner that comes in for 8 hours a week and we have an ironer that comes in once a week, the cleaner does all the washing, so on the whole we don't do any washing, we don't do any ironing, we just do the shopping. The shopping on the whole has been done online by Tesco's, and it's delivered either when Gary is on a conference call, during the day, then he can be on a conference call on his mobile, and unpack the shopping, or we unpack it in the evening.* **KF73**

This is also born out by Sam in the excerpts below.

Sam - *If I've got time I still Hoover or maybe do the veg for dinner* **SM433**

Sam - *It all depends how busy I am, but I would do some domestic work during the day if I get chance* **SM104**

The benefits of working from home for men's parental identities are expressed by them in terms of strengthening relationships and bonds with their children. See below examples from Adam and Dan, the two male participants who seem to prioritise fatherhood over their careers:

Adam - *When I was a 9-5 person, I don't know whether my relationship with him [his son] would be as strong as it is now, because I'd have only seen him an hour or two at night and then weekends, I would had to have made more of weekends because I wouldn't have seen him* **AM301**

Dan - *I think if he spent a lot of time without me then the bonds would be less firm, I think spending time with a child, certainly at the age he is, at 4 and a half, it's so important to spend quality time with them* **DM262**

And Ken, who makes a clear priority of neither role overall, expresses that working from home has been the catalyst in allowing him to review his priorities in life:

Me - *How would you categorise yourself firstly, as a Dad firstly or as a computer analyst firstly?*

Ken - *Er. It's a tricky one that. Will I say Dad first? I'd say Dad first really, now why would I say that? Mm. Probably because, I don't know, because of the flexibility I suppose, you know, I can concentrate on my kids now* **KM316**

It is also common for the men to express being able to be more involved in parenting as an opportunity or a privilege:

Dan - *I know that I'm probably in a very privileged position to have a job which allows me to have flexible working. If I was a factory worker who had to clock in at 9 and finish at 5, 5.30, then there isn't the option of teleworking, so I do consider myself very privileged, and I know there's many a father would love to be able to do what I'm doing* **DM293**

Me - *Do you think of yourself more as a father or more as a territory project coordinator?*

Sam – *Em .Bit of both really, I do see my self as a father, it's hard to balance, I'm glad I've got that opportunity, yeah, I get that opportunity* **SM448**

Sam - *Parental identity, for a male, moving over to a position a lot of working men have not had the opportunity to do, my children get to see a father identity much more than somebody working who's not tele-based, teleworking based, home-based so that's a good thing for the future, balancing family life, I think it's historically the male, the man goes out to work and earns the money and doesn't get to see his children much, and whether that... children get to grow up ok with that, but at least my children will grow up with a more father figure and understanding and I have a close relationship, I'm not saying that anybody in an office doesn't have a close relationship... I've just had the opportunity to experience it that much more, I see my kids growing up that much more* **SM411**

But the expectation that men who work from home will be more available to their families is claimed to be experienced as problematic by some – especially, it seems, by those who do not prioritise either the professional or parental role with me. James, for example, describes being distracted by the temptation to see his son, Henry; and his wife, Helen, feels the need to remove herself and their son from their home in order to allow James to work:

James - *Having Helen and Henry around is a real temptation, especially if they're in the next room, and I hear Henry having a lot of fun, I'd love to go and see what he's doing* **JM380**

James - *Helen feels at the moment that she needs to be careful about disturbing me when she's around and she makes a particular effort to get out of the house to toddler groups and so on, to make sure I have time to get on with things* **JM688**

Sam reports that he finds it frustrating that his family do not understand that when he is working at home he is not automatically available to them:

Sam - *When you're busy, which you know is quite often, and your children and your wife are at home, I've got to be honest, it's a nightmare, they can disturb your work and I get very frustrated and somebody's shouting and screaming downstairs and I'm busy* **SM226**

Sam - *I think the main disadvantage is your family understanding that just because you work at home that, you know, I'm there for anything: 'come and do this' or 'come and do that', and that's the hardest thing is like saying that 'I'm at work' I can handle it but I find the family don't understand just because I'm at home I can jump and do anything* **SM233**

James poignantly articulates the feelings of conflict and tension that trying to 'balance' both roles brings⁹:

Me - *How would you categorise yourself, as a father firstly or in your occupational role firstly?*

James – *I think that for me the two are always in conflict, I don't feel I'm doing as well in either role as I'd like to* **JM574**

James - *As time goes on you find that you're making more and more trade offs between what you're actually doing in your work and the overall sort of lifestyle that you're trying to balance with it* **JM52**

Overall, the male participants suggest that telework allows them to 'be there' more as parents, with one (Gary) commenting that he now feels '*more of a parent*'. A male participant's wife (Kath) adds that her husband (Gary) is able to do more childcare and domestic work since working from home, which has lessened her own contribution and has perhaps helped her to prioritise her professional role. The ability to engage more in family life is generally expressed as a '*privilege*' and an '*opportunity*' by these men, but, especially where

⁹ I find it remarkable that these men, whom I had known for a matter of hours, expressed such private thoughts. The interview context might be seen to have provided a confessional or cathartic place for these men, and indeed I might have been key in providing an audience for such expressions

participants fail to prioritise either their parental or professional self, conflict and frustration are also reported.

Women's professional identities

Kath and Helen (whilst the former prioritises her professional role, and the latter seems to make a priority of neither the professional or parental role) both express their professional roles in terms of the accumulation of expertise:

Kath - I became a subject matter expert in the European business **KF16**

Me - What does your career mean to you?

Helen – Em, it's something I enjoy a lot, it's something I'm trained for, you know, specialised, taken a lot of time to specialise in **HF39**

And Anthea and Tina (the former prioritising her parental role overall, and the latter making a priority of neither role) both describe their careers in terms of working hard and seeking a challenge:

Anthea - I nearly went into teaching but then opted for journalism cos I thought it was more of a challenge, it's harder to get into, I thought it was harder to succeed in **AF11**

Me - You've mentioned already that you seem to have more, you seem to be more of an intensive worker since working from home...

Tina – I've always done, I've always been like that, cos before I worked for myself and that's like 24 hours a day, seven days a week, you can't leave it, can you, to somebody else when you're working for yourself? And I've been brought up like that really **TF215**

Kath, the only participant, male or female, to clearly prioritise their professional role above her parental role in their talk with me, describes her professional life in terms of love, finding recognition and meaning in the excerpts below:

Me – *How would you categorise yourself first as a mother, or as a business resource manager?*

Kath – (very quick to respond) *As a European Resource Manager* **KF247**

Kath - *I love what I do and I'm lucky and fortunate that I'm actually very good at it and I'm recognised as being good across Europe, which makes me feel, it gives me what I need* **KF37**

Me - *What does your career mean to you?*

Kath – *Probably too much if you ask Gary [her husband], I think he would say that my career is probably, probably the most important thing, I love my children dearly but they're going to grow up, my relationship with Gary is fine providing I'm working, I think if I didn't work I'd be depressed and I'd be really upset, so it means everything to me* **KF50**

Kath also seems keen to distinguish herself from less professional people throughout her interview with me:

Kath - *If you have, I don't know, people taking calls for a call centre from home, I don't think that's going to make a difference to the world or to their families but I do think if you're looking at a professional person doing this type of role I think it's fine* **KF231**

Kath - *People use it as a reason not to work: 'I'm working from home' and it just means actually mowing the lawn, because of the nature of my personality that wouldn't happen with me, but I can easily see it happening with people.* **KF149**

Here she can also be seen to be distancing herself from negative stereotypes about home-based workers – that they are perhaps not as hard working as their office-based colleagues.

Other participants seem to find it less straightforward to prioritise the professional side of their selves. University-educated Anthea, who works part time as a journalist for a national newspaper, reflects on a tension that has emerged for her - even though she is overall seen to prioritise her parental role:

Me - *What does your career mean to you?*

Anthea - *Quite a lot. I think a lot of girls grow up and they're taught to be ambitious, and to get exams and so on, go to university, especially these days, everybody's expected to go to university, then have children. Especially these days, more and more women have careers, lots and lots of my friends have been to university, given it up and they're at home full time, or they're doing a lot less challenging jobs to fit in with the family, I don't think women should really have to do that, it's a choice, but it sort of grates on you a little bit, that women are told up to a certain point to work hard and use their brains, then have to put that on hold for so many years, it doesn't quite follow, so I'm quite keen on women being able to do both, but at the same time I'm not really for when you've got a family, working full time, there is that sort of paradox I suppose, that sort of conflict* **AF57**

Above she echoes the conflicting dominant discourses, that, on the one hand encourage people to aim high in their professional careers, and on the other suggest that women should prioritise their roles as mothers, leaving them in an untenable position and left making trade offs between the two roles, where, at least in Anthea's social world, paid work seems to be more commonly sacrificed. Sandra, who also seems to have made a decision to focus on her parental role, though, does not articulate a reduced focus toward the professional role as a dilemma for her:

Me - *Have you got any aims for your future career?*

Sandra – *No, not really, no, cos I'm quite happy with what I'm doing, I'm quite comfortable* **SF47**

Tina, who fails to prioritise either role overall in her interview with me, does however hint that which role a woman seeks to prioritise depends on the stage she is at in her life. Significantly she represents career as giving her a meaningful future:

Tina - *I wasn't really interested in having a career I don't think, when the kids were little, but now they're older, I'm really enjoying it and I'd be upset I suppose if I lost it now, because they're going to have left home and I'd be left at home*

with nothing wouldn't I? But now I've got some sort of career and future ahead of me **TF60**

Barbara discusses work as a means to obtaining independent money, yet having a career signifies something more fundamental to her: independence itself. She expresses that her role not only gives her financial recompense, but additional 'power' as well.

Barbara - My career means to me independence, it means independent money for me, it gives me more power in my life as well **BF69**

To summarise, surprisingly, the only participant to prioritise the professional role in their interview with me is a woman, and she uses terms more commonly associated with motherhood to describe her career. Even for those women who do not prioritise professional roles with me, the importance of career is reflected in their talk about power, meaning and independence. One participant (Anthea) also describes the conflicting messages evident for women in society today, which seem to demand a sacrifice of, or at least a reduced focus toward, career when children come along.

Women's professional identities in Home-based telework

For those women who clearly prioritise one role, either the professional or parental, in their interviews with me, home-based telework is reported as making life less stressful. For Kath, she can now combine some childcare duties whilst maintaining a primary focus on her professional role:

Kath - I think it makes life slightly less stressful, because I think if I was in the office permanently and I knew I had to collect the kids and then I was late because I was on a conference call it would be far more stressful **KF141**

Kath - I'm probably the only one of the mothers who goes to school with her mobile phone in her ear and I can be on conference calls whilst I'm picking them

up, and I think our kids are really used to it, our daughter'll say 'Mum's on a call', or 'she'll be late cos she's on a conference call' KF260

And Sandra reports finding less stress in maintaining a focus on her role in the family, which overall she seems to prioritise:

Sandra - I'd sooner stay at home, cos I find it's a lot, it's a lot less stressful at home, a lot less stressful SF229

Me - How would you categorise yourself first, as a mother or as a professional council worker?

Sandra – Both actually

Me – Yeah

Sandra – Yeah cos I switch me self on to me council worker mode when I'm on me own, the kids have gone to school and I'm, I can switch me self back on to a Mum

Me- And do you think working from home's changed that at all, or is that how you've always been?

Sandra – Em. No. I used to find that I got home, I'd need to unwind and come down and really think you know 'oh I've got to start tea and I've got to do that' and I'd get myself really anxious, where as now I don't so I just think it's made me more sure of myself SF248

In terms of the impact of telework upon women's professional roles, two major issues emerge. The first is how they are perceived, especially when other people do not understand that, although they are at home, they are also 'at work', as demonstrated by the following quotes:

Barbara - People come round, I didn't expect that, you know that people come round cos it is your home at the end of the day and you get a lot of phone calls, personal calls, at home that you don't really get at work which you have to get out of them, you have to say 'I can't really talk to you cos I'm working at home' BF179

Ruby - *They sort of think 'oh she's at home, I can go round and see her whenever I want and I can call whenever I want' and they don't realise that I still have that work to do, so I do have to have some boundaries there and you know if friends or me Mom is on the phone I have to say 'I've got to go, I've got work to do and I'll call you when I've finished'* **RF358**

Tina - *They say things to me like 'did you see such and such on morning TV?' and I say 'No' – 'Well you were at home weren't you?' – 'Yeah but I don't watch morning TV – I'm working'* **TF334**

Kath again stresses her own perception that unsupervised people might be less dedicated to their paid working roles, and again she is keen to stress that she is not that kind of person:

Kath - *I think that people's belief is that if you work from home you don't do a lot and in fact the gentleman over the road... he works from home and his wife laughs cos he'll be out shopping or whatever and she'll be working, but if you're asking what they think of me as an individual, everyone knows that I work.*

KF276

Kath - *You have to have good management in place because otherwise people will just take the Mickey* **KF286**

Again these quotes suggest that these women wish to disassociate themselves from negative images of home-based work as being an excuse to work less.

The second key issue which arises for the female teleworkers I interviewed is the increase and intensification of their work. And this seems to be linked to the fear of being accused of not being committed to work (a perception which the quotes above reflect). Anthea and Tina both speak in terms of overcompensating for people's suspicions by overworking:

Anthea - *Since I started home-working, I feel I have to almost compensate for the fact that I'm allowed to work from home, so I do tend to, I'm definitely more productive than people in the office* **AF205**

Tina - *Some people might think, 'oh I'll go and put washing out', or 'I'll go and start getting tea ready' but unfortunately I'm not like that, I overcompensate working from home, so I would make them [her family] have their tea later rather than do that, cos I don't feel... somebody's paying me to do some work and that is what I'm doing, I work for them* **TF140**

Tina - *I overcompensate, I find it's harder work than if I just went to an office and worked 9-5 and came home, because you don't leave it at work, it's always there, and sometimes at weekends, because I work from a laptop, at weekends I think 'ooh I'll just do such and such'* **TF173**

On the other hand, Ruby provides a stark example of the effect that home-based telework might have upon women's professional identities. She speaks of becoming increasingly apathetic to her career since working from home:

Me - *What does your career mean to you?*

Ruby – *Well it used to mean quite a lot, I don't think it means quite as much to me now as it used to, I think that since I've started home-working my views on what's important has changed* **RF65**

Ruby - *When I was in the office, I was very 'go-getter' and trying to prove me self all the time, because you're always thinking about promotion, but since I've been at home working, you know, that's not necessarily been the case, I'm still committed to my work you know, I do still give 100% when I'm working, it's just, I don't feel that I've got to try and impress anybody, there's no bosses walking around looking and monitoring how you're working* **RF53**

Ruby - *I wouldn't say that I am now a career person, I would say that I am now quite happy to stay as I am and mull along and continue what I'm doing now* **RF278**

Overall the female participants seem to suggest that home-based telework allows them to focus on their prioritised role, whether parental or professional. In terms of professional identities, their talk suggests a struggle to overcome people's

perceptions, that they are either not working, or not committed to their professional roles. This seems to lead to over-working in order to 'compensate' for such attitudes, though in one case (Ruby's) working from home seems to have created increased apathy towards the pursuit of career progression and a move toward the prioritisation of the parental role in her identity construction.

Men's professional identities

None of the men seem to clearly prioritise the professional role above their parental role in their talk with me, but as with the women above, Dan and Gary both express the professional sides of their identities in terms of the accumulation of expertise (despite the former prioritising his parental role overall and the latter making no such priority):

Dan - *To do this type of role you have to be an expert in your field, so highly technical in the knowledge field that I'm in* **DM44**

Me - *What does your career mean to you?*

Gary – *Quite a lot, because, you know from our conversations, I studied for an MBA and completed that this year, so obviously that's an investment that we made to further the career* **GM47**

James, who also fails to make a clear priority of either role, describes his career in terms of self-fulfilment and recognition, as well as in terms of '*achieving something useful*', although he acknowledges that this latter element has declined recently, perhaps as demands of fatherhood came along to compete for his attentions, as he later suggests:

Me - *What does your career mean to you?*

James – *I guess... well it's multi-faceted. It's partly about self-fulfilment and sort of recognition for being good at what I'm doing* **JM71**

James - *It's about achieving something useful, I guess that again has tended to decline over time, at the beginning of my career when a lot of my contemporaries*

from college were going off to become accountants I thought that was pointless and so I was going off into engineering and sort of changing the world a bit **JM79**

James - The balance becomes a bit more orientated towards our actually earning a living and providing for my family, so in that sense the career becomes a means to an ends **JM83**

Magnus highlights the convention that men would normally be expected to introduce themselves as professional rather than parental beings:

Me - How would you categorise yourself firstly, as a father or as a self-employed businessman?

Magnus - Em. Probably as a self-employed business man, because if you meet people they say 'what do you do?' I would automatically respond 'I'm a management consultant' rather than 'I'm a father'. The two jobs are obviously different but equally important, so I'm trying to devote as much time to each as I could but on balance my answer to that question would be as a management consultant **MM274**

Sam, though, expresses a common theme: that whilst there is some drive to achieve success in the professional role, this must be balanced with the parental role:

Sam - I am ambitious I want to move on but because I've got a young family there is an added aspect that I want to balance that as well **SM56**

Adam provides an extreme example of someone who, perhaps in his attempts to show the strength of his allegiance to the parental role, dismisses the idea of a professional self:

Me - What does career mean to you?

Adam - Career, I hate the word, I'm not somebody who pursues a career at the expense of all else, again that's why I like what I'm doing, I've always seen a job as a means to an end, if I didn't have to I wouldn't work, I'd rather spend it with my family, and this [telework] gives me more time to spend with them **AM64**

Adam - *I've never really seen myself as a 'career person'* **AM227**

So despite Magnus's description of '*automatically*' introducing himself to people with reference to his professional rather than his parental role, most of the male participants talk is about making trade offs and trying to find a balance between professional and parental selves – reflecting my categorisation of many of these men as prioritising neither role. One though (Adam), as can be seen above, goes so far as to dismiss the notion of career altogether.

Men's professional identities in Home-based telework

Above Adam hints that his ability to dismiss notions of careerism and focus on his parental role has been facilitated by the adoption of home-based telework. Other participants, though, express concern that their careers might suffer as a result of working from home, particularly through a loss of visibility:

Gary - *By not being in the office, you're not visible. If you wanted to, it's harder to play the politics from home, because you can't influence and network so much in the corridors* **GM56**

Dan - *Certainly your work identity is typically identified from your presence in work, if that presence isn't seen, in person, I've experienced it, where my work has been appreciated, but no-one can put a face to a name, so you, that kind of stifles your career, because when people are talking about promoting people or giving someone some affirmation for some positive work, because people don't know you face to face, they will probably put someone who they've seen face to face ahead of you, so it can actually set back your status in the work area* **DM216**

Sam - *You're faceless, so I'm somebody who, I've got a lot of people I know but I've never met, they might think I'm good but because I'm a faceless identity they can think I'm wonderful, whether that helps my career or not is a different thing* **SM407**

In addition to this the male participants report feeling that their teleworking status is met with scepticism and suspicion. By work colleagues:

Dan - *One of the practical ways I work from home is to avoid going to London as frequently as I would if I wasn't out there doing child care, so one of the reactions would be that they're probably wondering where I am at a lot of meetings and why I'm always teleconferencing in, that's actually a small hurdle to overcome*
DM115

James - *If I'm working then I have to dash in there [his home office] otherwise whoever's on the end of the phone hears this baby voice in the background, this toddler yelling and thinks I'm not working*
JM765

Ken - *Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday I have to leave early, or I don't get in as early as most other people, I don't know if they think 'he just goes home and doesn't do anything' or whatever, has an early day or stuff like that*
KM90

As well as by those in their communities:

Ken - *Picking the kids up, I always get the little jokes about, you know 'working hard today?', and all that sort of stuff, it's just the little comments you get, I suppose they think I'm swanning around at home not doing sweet F.A.*
KM302

Adam - *I am convinced that people make assumptions about me because a lot of the time if I'm not going into the office I might not have a shave in the morning, I might just get up and get on with what we're doing and yes I am around a lot and might take them shopping and maybe people think I'm unemployed – I actually don't care anymore*
AM320

Dan - *I know a lot of my neighbours... I've got a nice car on the path and it never goes anywhere, and they see me here, also see young ladies entering the house all the time when I get a new au pair in, so they probably think I'm in some kind of dodgy industry. Who cares what they think as long as my son's happy.*
DM268

But a response to these suspicions, which seems to be typical of those who prioritise their roles as fathers, is to view such comments as a '*small hurdle*' (Dan); claim not to care (Adam and Dan again); and to ignore such suspicions: '*as long as my son's happy*' (Dan).

Gary and James comment that one impact of home-based telework is the loss of certain professional routines and status symbols:

Gary - I suppose if I put on a suit and a tie like I used to everyday and had to polish my shoes and go into the office, that physical badge is going to be on me when I leave and when I come back. I think it's also a signal, a symbol, to everyone else, they see you leaving and they see you come back **GM342**

James - I had a 50-person team and I had a nice office, and those sorts of status trappings, that I guess contribute to anybody's idea of self, concept of self. Now I spend most of my time in hotel rooms, airport lounges, or in a funny little lean-to room at the back of the house, which is much more untidy than I'd allow a workspace in an office to get to **JM562**

And interestingly, for Gary, ideas of 'work' seem to have spilled over into family life in unexpected ways such as his language (echoing his wife, Kath's, talk of parenting) and the games of his children:

Gary - We had a little family meeting last night **GM86**

Gary - Their [his children's] role play games, that they play with each other, are all about having a meeting and being on a teleconference **GM148**

As with the women, it seems that a major effect of home-based telework for the male participants has been the intensification of work, but the men do not necessarily report this as a negative aspect of telework, see the examples below from Sam:

Sam - Because I work harder that's recognised and especially in this new role I'm doing, I've got high recommendations of the work I've done, and that will do me

in good stead, very highly recognised right across the UK for the job I'm doing, mainly because I put the effort in and I've got the opportunity to put the effort in
SM335

Sam - I work really hard, they get twice as much out of me, really long hours, and also I don't mind working at night, if I've got something to do, and then on other occasions I'll take it easy
SM313

Dan presents home-based telework as a facilitator of balance between the two roles of worker and father, as well as considering how the two roles are interconnected:

Dan - You're a good worker, you're a good parent, because you're balancing the work and your parenting together, as opposed to: it's one extreme or another, full on parenting or full on work
DM226

Dan - I think it's just put everything into perspective, to know that there is a balance to be met, you can get too hung up on a job and a career, and you lose sight of what the important things are in life, I think that working from home has allowed that balance to become quite clear and set in mind, so you know that your family is important and work is important, to feed and sustain that family, and that's why you do it
DM247

But for James, who seems to prioritise neither the parental or professional role with me, this way of working is reported as bringing the two roles into direct conflict:

Me - Do you think working from home has added to that conflict or alleviated that a little?

James – I think it increases the conflict to be honest, partly because it's made it more immediate
JM595

In sum there seems to be a perception held by the male participants that in telework men's professional roles are damaged by a lack of visibility; scepticism from work colleagues, neighbours and broader communities; as well as a loss of

the routines and symbols of professionalism. As with the female participants, the response seems to be to intensify work, yet for the men, there are reports of this actually being positive in terms of career – reports which are not evident in my interviews with female teleworkers. Additionally Adam suggests that home-based telework can facilitate a man's pre-existing desires to prioritise his parental role, whereas other men describe the outcome of telework as either facilitating '*balance*' or creating '*conflict*' between the two roles of parent and professional.

Summary of Key Findings

The key findings from the empirical research conducted can be summarised as follows:

General identity findings

- The majority of participants seem to find it difficult to consistently prioritise either the parental or professional role in their interviews with me. Most prioritise neither of these roles, apparently seeking instead to balance the two in their constructions of self
- The emotional costs seem to be highest where neither the parental or professional role is prioritised. These costs seem to be gendered with women articulating feelings of guilt and men, frustration
- Telework is reported as acting as 1) **an enabler** (of existing desires to prioritise certain roles); 2) as a **catalyst** (in revealing the potential benefits of doing so); and 3) as a **magnifier** (of existing tensions between roles)

Interaction of telework with parental and professional identities

- Some of the female participants report having an increased focus on their parental roles since teleworking, yet telework is also reported as facilitating a focus on professional role for one female participant
- All of the men report desires to be more involved parents and report telework as central to realising these

- Telework is reported as undermining professional identities for all participants (with the exception of the one woman who prioritises this role) – and this takes different forms for the female participants and the male

Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter a selection of the empirical data is presented in order to tell a story of how home-based telework is experienced by the seven mothers and seven fathers I interviewed, and its impact upon their constructions of self as parents and as professionals. In the following chapter I consider the implications of this, as I compare my findings to the existing literature on these topics; propose the discourses that might be most relevant to parents in telework; and consider the work, costs and rewards of this mode of work.

Chapter 5 - Discussion

Introduction

I begin this chapter by presenting a careful comparison of the findings of my empirical research, as presented in the previous chapter, chapter four, and the extant literature, as reviewed in chapter two, so as to ensure that the key themes present in the current literature are examined in the light of the new data collected. This is followed by a summary of the key discourses that I propose are utilised by parents in telework in their constructions of self, and an explanation of each of these. Next I discuss the identity-related work that might be required by parents in telework taking various identity 'paths' and consider the costs and rewards that this mode of work might bring for them, as well as for relevant others¹⁰.

Comparison of findings to existing literature

In chapter two I highlight the tensions, gaps, and key questions raised by the existing bodies of literature on the topics of telework, identity, gender, parenting and career. In this part of the thesis I go on to present a comparison, summarising what my research suggests about the existing literature in these areas; how this might be challenged or indeed supported by my own findings. I begin by discussing telework itself, as a context for academic research, before focusing specifically on the topics of parental, then professional identities within telework, which are most relevant to my research questions.

Telework as a research domain

My review of the existing literature concerning telework reveals difficulties in defining this mode of work. It is suggested that 'types' of telework might usefully be utilised, labelled with regard to categories such as the primary location of

¹⁰ Readers should be aware that some of this discussion, particularly around Dan and Kath's experiences, is reproduced in Musson and Marsh (2008)

work, level of dependency on ICTs, and the frequency of intra or extra-organisational contact (Daniels et al, 2001). I deliberately sought to provide some limits to the diversity of my sample by focusing solely on home-based teleworkers; stipulating that participants should be employed in a professional role; and spend a minimum of 50% of their working hours based in their homes. However, even within my small sample group, of seven men and seven women, great variety is to be found. For example, in relation to telework, there are differences in the time participants spend working at home (from 50% right up to 100% of their paid hours); the length of time they have been employing telework (ranging from 2 months to 7 years); and whether they personally instigated the move to telework or if this came from their employer. Notably, further diversity is to be found in the group in terms of family circumstances (eg. children are reported as ranging from 20 weeks to 18 years of age); domestic and childcare arrangements (with some participants employing paid services whilst some have full time spousal support); and employment status (2 of the group are self-employed; 2 are employed on a part-time basis). It is also interesting to note the range of occupations represented – which stretch traditional understandings of the term ‘professional’ (which I shall explore in more detail later in this chapter).

This suggests that the divisions traditionally applied to research on telework, only scratch the surface in highlighting the heterogeneity held within this category of work(er). I propose that those further differences, outlined above, associated with demography, domestic and employment arrangements, which much of the current literature seems to ignore, are just as worthy of note, perhaps even more so than those traditionally reported factors, especially in a study such as mine which concerns issues of identity. All of these points of divergence mean that there is potentially a large number of possibilities for ‘sub-grouping’ the teleworkers who have taken part in my study, for example by similar employment type or by the age or number of children they have. However, largely due to the small sample size (the reasons for which are outlined in chapter three), as well as the specific focus of the research questions (which the literature reviewed in chapter two, plus my own interests, led me toward), I have taken a decision to mainly focus upon just two characteristics: 1) the participant’s gender and 2) whether the participant primarily focuses, in their interview with me, upon the parental role, professional role, or neither. These categories provide a useful

framework for analysis of the data collected but this is not to say that these categorisations signal any kind of substantive homogeneity amongst the people within them (this will of course be explored later in this chapter), and also does not imply that other points of difference are not also worthy of study – simply that these are not to be the primary focus of the present thesis. Indeed, whilst research on telework has been extremely popular in recent years, my review of the associated literature, as well as my own experience of empirical investigation in this area, has led me to a view of telework as a mode of work with much remaining research potential.

The literature on telework further reveals difficulties in accurately measuring the scale of uptake, mapping the demographic and employment-related characteristics of those who utilise telework, and analysing how different groups employ telework; a problem that might be associated with the definitional ambiguities I describe above. My review of research on telework shows that the fundamental statistical information that is presently available is not as up-to-date as I would like, and indeed expect, for such a popular area of research. In terms of gender, one thing that the existing statistics suggest is that women are more likely to perform administrative work and men more likely to perform professional work in telework (Hotopp, 2002). This therefore reflects overall trends of gender distribution in employment (Haddon and Brynin, 2005) and suggests that a person's existing social status is unlikely to be changed by utilising telework (Haddon and Brynin, 2005). My sample is composed only of those who self-identify as performing professional work, yet a simple overview of the job titles provided by my participants (see fig. 4.11) shows that those who report being 'consultants' and 'analysts' are men, and those who report being seemingly lower level 'officers' and 'assistants' are women – though I of course acknowledge that this is a somewhat blunt measurement. Hotopp (2002) further claims that more men than women telework because more men than women are self-employed, hence are likely to be seeking the benefits of reduced real estate costs. It is therefore interesting to note that whilst my sample is constructed of an equal number of men and women, the two self-employed workers are both male.

It is also reported that men are more likely to be occasional teleworkers, with female teleworkers more likely to spend most or all of their working hours at

home (Felstead et al, 2002). Again my sample is deliberately restricted in this respect, to those who work from home for at least half of their working hours, so data concerning this measurement are already biased. However it is interesting to note that, of the 5 participants who report spending 100% of their working hours in the home, 4 of these are women. Yet if we consider those who work from home for 90% or more of their working hours, then 3 out of 7 of these are men, providing less certain support for this claim. A report by Sustel (2004) proposes that many people change their teleworking pattern from week to week. It seems that this is reflected in the reluctance of my participants to report a fixed number of hours that they spend working from home on their written summary sheet (see appendix 1), with many providing a range instead (see fig. 4.12), and this is further substantiated by the interview transcripts. Overall my findings seem to align with the claim by Sustel (2004), that there is a general lack of homogeneity, and therefore predictability, within the label 'teleworker'.

Telework emerges here as a rich and diverse research domain. This stands in opposition to much reported research which simplifies or ignores the social and material differences amongst people in favour of more tangible, or perhaps more accessible and more easily understood, variables associated with telework itself. It is also worth noting that the more commonly reported variables tend to be those which management might have some control over. This therefore suggests that, whilst much existing research takes a managerialist, positivist approach, there is room for much more interpretivist, people-centred study of telework, which acknowledges the diversity of those who employ this practice rather than attempting to deny or downplay these differences. In the following sections of this chapter I explore further, more qualitative variation, in terms of how women and men construct their parental and professional identities in telework.

Telework and Identity

In my review of the broad literature concerning issues of identity, which spans several disciplines, and also in the philosophy and methods chapter (chapter three) I outline my attraction to the philosophy of social constructionism. I describe how this leads me to a view of identity as a dynamic process of self

understanding; something that one 'works at' in social contexts, drawing upon discursive, as well as material, resources to construct a 'legitimate' self, appropriate to the time, place and also taking into account those who might be present as an audience to this identity 'performance'. In this view the interviews I conducted can be seen as constituting social interaction and therefore are an arena for identity construction and performance in themselves. As such I must stress that the data collected as part of this project might be seen as highly specific to those one-off interactions and cannot be generalised to how these people construct their identities in other contexts, at other times, or with other people. In chapter three I also draw upon the notion of discourse, which I propose are culturally and historically specific messages, available to guide people toward 'appropriate' roles and behaviours. In the context of home-based telework, I propose that the roles which might be seen as the most obvious and accessible to my sample group are those of parent and professional. I further propose that these roles are heavily gendered, with women finding the parental, domestic role more available to them, and men finding that they are more 'at home' in the masculine world of professional work.

There seems to have been remarkably little attention given to issues of identity in telework by researchers in organisation studies, and more broadly, despite this appearing to me as an arena which brings issues of identity to the fore, a view shared by Tietze and Musson (2002). In one exception Baruch (2000), like me, focuses upon parental and professional identities, and claims that, in her study, telework is seen to have 'a positive impact for the employee as a family member, and negative on career aspiration and future career perceptions' (p43). These brief conclusions seem to me rather too simplistic, again denying the diverse range of people who utilise this mode of work, and their complex relationship to telework in terms of constructions of self. This realisation (as well as the work started by Brocklehurst, 2001) was a catalyst for my own project, prompting me to want to explore the rich lived-reality of home-based telework and how it interplays with gendered constructions of parental and professional selves.

Telework and the reproduction of gendered parental identities

The literature relating to parental identities, which comes at this topic from a variety of perspectives, is largely united in suggesting that parental roles in western societies today are gendered, albeit somewhat less so than in previous generations. The extent to which this has really changed in recent years though, does still stir some debate, particularly in gender studies, where many scholars remain cautious of viewing any purported evidence as cause for celebration. In family studies too it is claimed that even today 'the single clearest inequality between the genders ... relates to parenting' (Bernardes, 1997, p187), a view which I am drawn to and am keen to explore further, specifically in the context of debates on flexible working practices.

It is suggested throughout much of the literature (eg. in Lorber and Farrell, 1991) that society continues to attach different expectations to mothers and to fathers: in general, women are more likely to prioritise their parental roles, and - in the 'idealised' image at least - they fulfil this role with care and affection; meanwhile men are more likely to prioritise their professional roles, and are imagined as emotionally distant providers or 'breadwinners' for their families. It is conjectured that this is because, in our society, the parental role remains more accessible and legitimate for women and the professional role remains more accessible and legitimate for men, despite a shift in employment legislation, and, some suggest, in the aspirations of, and expectations upon, men and women themselves.

My interpretation of the roles prioritised by each participant in my own study, suggests that, in this sample group, only three out of the seven women actually prioritise their parental role. Furthermore two of the men also prioritise their parental role, confounding expectations, and, perhaps even more surprisingly, the prioritisation of neither role was in fact the most commonly observed stance for both genders. It is unclear however exactly how this relates to telework: whether this is a direct result of, or even a precursor to, working from home or whether this simply reflects the choices of men and women in broader society today – the following sections aim to explore this issue in more depth.

Motherhood in Telework

The topic of motherhood can be seen as having fallen out of vogue somewhat in recent years in terms of academic research, as the lack of up to date literature testifies. Motherhood was certainly a central theme in feminist texts of the sixties and seventies, with trailblazers such as Friedan (1965) highlighting that women were expected, then at least, to be content with only 'relational identities', as the often unseen 'other' to their working husbands and unacknowledged servant for their families. Many writers since have stressed the sacred idealised image of mothers (eg. Richardson, 1993 in Bernardes, 1997) and how this is an impossible ideal for women to live up to (Kitzinger, 1978). Kofodimos (1993 in Caprioni 2004) proposes that, furthermore, a woman's self esteem is intrinsically linked to how closely she feels she lives up to this model of a perfect mother.

It is therefore interesting that only three of the seven female respondents seem to consistently prioritise their parental role in their interviews with me. It is also worth noting that the three women who, I feel, present themselves as mothers, more so than as professionals, are the two participants who occupy the roles which seem to be the least in keeping with traditional ideas of professional work of all of those in my sample (Sandra and Ruby); plus Anthea, one of the two women who works part time (the other part time worker, Helen, did not focus so singularly upon her parental role). I suggest that these factors might be considered significant: perhaps for these women a presumed lack of allegiance to the professional role allows the ideological (and in Anthea's case, the temporal) space to prioritise the mother role; or perhaps the selection of what might be seen as less demanding professional roles was an active choice by these women, who had a pre-existing preference to focus more upon their parental role. In Sandra and Anthea's cases the data does not make clear at what stage their prioritisation of motherhood emerged, yet for Ruby a turning point is distinctly identified, as she articulates when I ask her how much her career means to her: *'it used to mean quite a lot, I don't think it means quite as much to me now as it used to, I think that since I've started home-working my views on what's important has changed'*. So, crucially, for Ruby at least, telework itself can be seen as pivotal in prompting, or at least solidifying, a prioritisation of

the parental role above professional work, and for all three women it can be seen as having enabled this preference.

The talk of the three women who seem to primarily identify as mothers is, as might be expected, about putting their children first, which aligns with Ribbens (1994 in Bernardes, 1997, p167) observation of the 'centrality of childrearing for the identities of women'. And statements from these women, such as this '*is how it should be*' (from Ruby), hint at an awareness of social and moral expectations that this is still the 'right thing' for a woman, even over forty years after the publication of Friedan's thesis. Some of those women who do not seem to prioritise either the parental or professional role with me express guilt or self-reproach about not having put motherhood first, for example Tina states '*I'm not a very good mother*'. This offers further support for the continued existence of social expectations, and a discourse, of women as the 'main parent'. As Kofodimos (1993 in Caprioni 2004) predicts, those women who fail to conform to this ideal report experiencing negative emotions, although one notable exception, Kath, is discussed below.

It is claimed in the literature that, in contemporary times, most women share some responsibility for breadwinning with their husbands (Reskin and Padavic, 1994), which is born out in the most recent labour market statistics available (ONS, 2008). Yet as Alvesson and Billing (1997, p98) comment it might be problematic if a woman refutes traditional ideas of family orientation too vehemently. It is interesting to note then that one of my female participants, Kath, consistently presents herself as more aligned with a professional role than with motherhood, and significantly, she does not express any guilt in articulating this preference. It would seem that, as a coping mechanism, rather than dwell upon the feminine discourse of the perfect mother, she instead frames herself within, what might be seen as, a more traditionally male discourse of providing and 'breadwinning' for her children, in terms of the lifestyle and experiences she is able to make available to them – a lens through which, it seems, she can feel successful and confident and, significantly, guilt-free.

Hochschild (2005, p77) describes a move in recent years towards an increased 'outsourcing' of the duties commonly associated with motherhood, to so called

'care professionals'. Kath's description of the arrangements she has in place to care for her children, as well as completing the domestic work in her home, is the most striking of all respondents in its complexity. This perhaps reflects the prestige that she seems to place on provision for her children, seemingly as opposed to 'hands on' mothering. Hochschild (2005) also claims that motherhood, in contemporary times, can be seen to be constructed using corporate values, ideas and language. This is reflected in Kath's use of organisational jargon to talk about her family (*'they have deliverables...'*), and again it might be significant that this kind of talk is not evident in the interviews of the other women, who are perhaps still wedded to traditional notions of motherhood, as something that is, or at least should be, central to women's identities, more so than paid work.

The literature is divided in terms of whether telework represents an emancipatory (Mirchandani, 1998; Taskin and Devos, 2005) or an oppressive mode of work for women (Olsen and Primps, 1990; Harpaz, 2002). This discrepancy seems to be echoed in the perceptions of some of the men related to my study. Some of the male participants stated an assumption that telework would be particularly difficult for mothers – though one female participant's husband is reported to have speculated, before she began teleworking, that it might be a perfect solution, allowing her to 'have it all' ie. be an involved parent as well as a successful career woman. The female participants themselves, however, generally report that the outcomes of home-based telework are positive for them, regardless of whether they prioritise the parental or professional role, or neither. The benefits of telework outlined by these women are the ability to 'be there' for their children; using the flexibility afforded by telework to attend special events such as school plays; and also in the increased visibility of these women to their families: *'for them to realise there's other sides to you'* (Anthea's words). This final benefit is not widely reported in the literature, and so can be seen as an original contribution to this debate, in which the theme of the invisibility of women is often discussed as a negative aspect of telework (Phizacklea and Wolkowitz, 1995).

Wilson and Greenhill (2004) express concern that traditionally gendered identities are more pronounced, when a woman works from home. Some of the

female participants in my study stress that telework enables them to perform their domestic role around their professional work, and one even comments that she now feels '*more of a mum*' (Ruby's words) because of telework. Yet the women themselves do not express this as a bad thing, therefore it cannot be straightforwardly proclaimed that telework either oppresses or emancipates these women, and certainly cannot be generalised to cover the experience of all teleworking women. Even amongst the seven women I interviewed, telework can be seen to open up a range of possibilities: promoting, or at least enabling, a focus on the parental role; allowing the prioritisation of an alternative, professional, role; and, to some extent, lessening the guilt of those women who are not able (or willing) to give priority to the traditional parental side of themselves.

Fatherhood in Telework

Halford (2006, p386) suggests that 'for employed fathers, the good father is a largely absent father'; a statement which reflects the social expectation that men will be engaged in paid work away from the home, in order to act as the proverbial breadwinner or provider for their families. Yet, by definition, home-based teleworkers defy this convention – in theory at least they are not physically away from their families as much as other working fathers. This, therefore, leads me to question whether male teleworkers with children might defy conventional images of fatherhood in other ways. Gerson (in Arendell, 1997) reviewed existing literature on fatherhood and suggests that there are three 'paths' presently acknowledged as being available to fathers generally, in terms of how they construct and enact this role. She proposes that they might 1) take a traditional path toward 'breadwinning'; 2) select to pursue/maintain their autonomy, escaping the 'shackles' of fatherhood and family life; or 3) might wish to engage in 'involved fatherhood'. She and other writers, though, note the difficulties that might be caught up in this latter option. Kimmel (1993, p1) for example claims that men would only be attracted to involved fatherhood if it could be seen to present 'no loss of income, prestige, and corporate support – and no diminished sense of 'manhood''.

The idea of the male parent as the breadwinner does reveal itself in the interviews I conducted with male teleworkers but, whilst this discourse is appropriated, it is important to note that it seems these men interpret this differently. Gary denies that this concept is gender specific any longer, claiming that women too can act as financial providers for their families – indeed this is also reflected in the talk of his wife Kath, discussed above, who, I feel, stresses the provision afforded by her professional role as key to her parental identity. Other male participants describe providing for their families as an important part of their parental identity, yet also describe making ‘*trade offs*’ (James’ words) in order to also spend time with their children; see for example Sam who describes turning down a higher paid job in order to continue teleworking. Overall in my interviews with male teleworkers, the solid distinction between ‘a breadwinner’ and ‘an involved father’ does not seem to hold true – these ‘forms’ of fatherhood are not mutually exclusive in their articulations and presentations of self. Furthermore, for the majority of these men, I interpret that no clear preference is demonstrated for either the parental or professional role.

It is noteworthy that none of the male participants seem to clearly prioritise their professional role above fatherhood in their interviews with me – a route that the literature suggests is more common and expected for men than for women. None of my male participants can be seen to pursue a strategy of autonomy and denial of their parental responsibilities either. What is most surprising is that two of the men who I interviewed seem to see themselves primarily as fathers, above any affiliation to the professional role. Furthermore all of the male participants express desires to be more involved fathers, which seems to defy Kimmel’s (1993) prediction that this would result in a diminished sense of manhood and might even hint at a fundamental social change in the fifteen years since he made this claim. Some of the male participants claim that these desires existed prior to the employment of telework but, for some, telework itself is portrayed as the catalyst for the reprioritisation - or desire to reprioritise - the parental role over the professional one. This echoes the scenario of the female teleworkers I interviewed, as I describe above. Furthermore these men describe telework as

having facilitated their desires, not just to see their children on special occasions, but to be more engaged in mundane 'every day' family life too¹¹.

Morgan (1996) stresses that the idea of 'care' is central to constructions of women's identities. It is remarkable then that there is very little talk about care and affection in all seven women's narratives about themselves as parents – perhaps this is such a reified notion that it has become unworthy of note by mothers themselves. This is however present in the talk of the men with regards to their parental roles – sentiments of love and affection towards their children pepper their talk about fatherhood. What is more, the chance to become more involved parents is described as a great opportunity and privilege afforded by telework, an opportunity which, these men suggest, previous generations did not have, and indeed some men in certain occupational roles today are also denied. Moorehouse (in Cowan et al, 1993) speculates that, in terms of parental roles, men are more commonly seen as helpers to their wives, rather than as parents in own right. There are some examples in my data of men suggesting that they do indeed 'help' their wives with childcare and domestic work. Additionally one participant, Magnus, suggests that life is made easier for him when his wife is not working and is available to look after their children – a view that he himself claims is somewhat unreasonable. It might be significant that he is, by some way, the oldest participant and this might be seen to substantiate the idea that a generational shift has occurred in fatherhood, where, what was once a commonplace family arrangement, is now seen to be unreasonable by this male participant, and seemingly as undesirable by several others.

In my review of the existing literature I identify a significant gap in actual research and empirical data about how men experience telework. Whereas it is suggested that female teleworkers feel guilt at being unable to attend to domestic chores and the care of their children whilst working from home (Bibby, 1999 in Mann et al, 2000), it is claimed that men find telework less stressful (Olsen and Primps, 1990). Bibby (1999, in Mann et al, 2000) claims that teleworking mothers are particularly likely to experience difficulties when children are present in the home,

¹¹ The extent to which these claims have been influenced by my own presence, and clear interest in fatherhood, is of course impossible to tell, but cannot be discounted as a possible reason for such expressions

being cared for by another adult, while they themselves are confined to the home-office, able to hear their children, but are not able to be with them. It is surprising, then that this sentiment is echoed in a quote from a male participant, James: '*Having Helen and Henry [his wife and child] around is a real temptation, especially if they're in the next room, and I hear Henry having a lot of fun, I'd love to go and see what he's doing*'.

Hylmo (2004) suggests that male teleworkers 'may have support systems at home that female teleworkers do not have' (p47) ie. their wives or other professional help. Whilst a number of the male participants report that their spouses are 'full time mums' or that they employ childcare and domestic workers (see table 4.13), others describe that telework has enabled them to do domestic work and be more 'hands on' parents themselves. Kath, the wife of male participant Gary, proclaims that men's use of telework is beneficial for women, as men can see the work that is involved in the traditionally female role of maintaining a home and family, and telework furthermore allows men to be available share this work. Following my review of a variety of literature I speculate that telework might be an important device in bringing men both physically and emotionally into family life. One male participant, Gary, reflects the sentiments of several of the men I interviewed, when he declares that he feels '*more of a parent now*'. This echoes a claim by one of the female teleworkers I interviewed (Ruby). Overall for these men telework can be seen as enabling, as well as prompting, a move (or a desire to move) toward more involved fatherhood, whilst at the same time they seem to still frame themselves as breadwinners; yet for those men who do not prioritise either the parental or professional role, some conflict and frustration is experienced; this will be explored further in subsequent sections of this chapter.

Telework and the reproduction of gendered professional identities

Grey (1994, p479), a critical theorist writing on the topic of career, proposes that, in some cases, 'the project of the self and career become interchangeable'. This suggests that one's professional life is central to the formation of one's identity in contemporary times, which perhaps reflects the inherently capitalist culture in which we live, where the alignment of one's values and identity with those of

corporate organisations is seen to give purpose and meaning to people's lives (Wilmott, 1993). I propose that in the case of telework, the idea of professional identity might come into question, as the usual physical and social context, ie. a standard working environment (if indeed there is such a thing these days), is not inhabited by the teleworker on a full time basis. As Goffman (1959) comments, identity is constructed using physical and material cues in social interaction. But, not only are many of the usual physical cues of professional life lost when a person works from home, also at risk is the level of social interaction itself – which might be less frequent or indeed might be virtual in nature, facilitated by ICTs (Information and Communication technologies). This is what leads me to explore precisely how home-based telework impacts upon the construction of a professional identity.

Traditionally the notion of professionalism was associated with a limited range of occupations but Fournier (1999) recently heralded an era of 'new professionalism', which has broadened the range of careers which might be classed as professional. Nowadays, she claims, the idea of a professional identity is available to more and more people than ever before and is emerging in unexpected domains of employment. This is seen to be the case in my own research, as my sample consists of a broad range of occupations (see table 4.11), despite being restricted to those who self-identified as professional workers on recruitment to this study. Despite Fournier's claim that professionalism is now a broad church, Coltrane (2004) proposes that there still exists an 'ideal' image of a professional worker: 'a man with a stay at home wife who fulfils his family obligations through being a breadwinner' (in Halford, 2006, p386). This suggests that there is a gendered nature to the professional role, just as there seems to be with parental roles, and furthermore hints that professional and parental selves are interconnected and perhaps dependent upon one another. Kanter (1977) supports the idea that professionalism is gendered, by proposing that the world of work is inherently masculine. The 'typical' manager, she suggests, will be asked to present qualities such as tough mindedness; analytic reasoning; and an ability to subordinate family matters to those of the professional realm. And she stresses that these are commonly seen as traits that only men possess.

At this stage I must remind the reader that in my study only one person, of all the seven male and seven female teleworkers I interviewed, seems to have prioritised their professional role over their parental one. This is significant in itself, considering the literature which suggests that in contemporary times the professional role is becoming more fundamental, in terms of identity construction, to a broader group of people. And yet even more surprising to me, considering the supposed masculine nature of the professional domain, is that the one participant who consistently identifies as career-centric in their interview with me is a woman, Kath. Ackers (1990) proposes that to be successful in the professional world of work women have to become 'honorary men' (in McDowell, 1997, p140), taking on characteristics such as those that Kanter describes above. Alternatively it might also be considered to be the case that a professional identity is nowadays available to women as much as it is to men and that these 'masculine' traits are less gendered now than has previously been the case; but it is of course impossible to draw a conclusion from the examination of just one case. What is interesting to me is the way in which Kath talks about her career: of it giving her what she needs and meaning everything to her; I propose that she uses terms more commonly associated with motherhood to describe her career. Conversely it is noted that on at least one occasion she uses organisational jargon to describe her relationship with her children, something that is not evident in the talk of any of the other mothers interviewed. This paradox is worthy of fuller investigation, and I will return to this, along with further such examples, later in this chapter.

Perhaps the fact that a woman would seek to identify as a professional should not be surprising today, as claiming a professional identity is said to be linked to ideas of power and liberation (Holmes et al, 1999; Roberts, 2000), which the feminist movement has urged us to seek. Indeed other female participants talk of their careers in terms of it giving them independence, power and a meaningful future. This leads me to realise that it might be Kath's prioritisation of the professional role above being a mother which is so remarkable to me, so engrained is the discourse that tells us that women will (and should) prioritise this sacred role – and that if they do not then they should at least demonstrate guilt and anxiety – which Kath does not, and makes no apologies for. This realisation is just one example of how my own subjective values as a researcher - and a

woman in contemporary British society – have been highlighted and challenged by this research; a point which warrants further attention in a more thorough reflexive evaluation of this method, which is provided in the final chapter of this thesis.

If the achievement of a successful career outside of the home is a symbol of the emancipation of women (Rich, 1976), it can be considered a matter of concern that more women are engaging in home-based work (Phizacklea and Wolkowitz, 1995). Indeed I have already pointed to Ruby's apparent apathy towards her career since she began teleworking as a possible cause for worry – though this is debatable, as she does not frame it in this way herself. Yet for Kath telework can be seen as enabling her to focus on professional life, as she describes, it removes the stress of having to worry about leaving work in order to care for her children. In a different way telework is said to remove stress and anxiety by Sandra, as the extra time it creates (which would previously been spent commuting by public transport) allows her to focus on her prioritised role as a mother. She praises telework for making her surer of herself as she finds she is more easily able to 'switch' from professional to parental 'mode'. Harpaz (2002, p74) proposes that a key advantage of telework is the 'increased autonomy and flexibility' in scheduling work and family responsibilities around each other; this is born out in my data, for all participants, male or female, and regardless of whether they prioritise their parental role, professional role, or are apparently seeking to balance the two.

Following my review of the literature I suggested that those home-based teleworkers who continue to construct themselves in terms of a professional identity might find themselves disembedded (Giddens, 1984) from dominant discourses of career but, as Kath's prioritisation of this role, and use of organisational jargon to describe herself, and even her family life, testifies, this does not appear to be the case for her. Indeed this might suggest that a 'disciplinary logic' (Fournier, 1999) operates to tie people to notions of professionalism, even when work is 'at a distance' from the physical organisation – yet, of course, only one person out of fourteen prioritising their professional role does not provide strong support for this claim, rather it suggests that the

prioritisation of the professional role might indeed be difficult, or perhaps undesirable, for the majority of teleworkers.

But what of the male teleworkers I interviewed and their relationship to the professional role? I have already expressed surprise that none of these seven men clearly prioritise their professional role above parenthood in their talk with me, despite there seeming to be some awareness that this might be expected of them, for example Magnus highlights the convention that it is usual for men to introduce themselves to others as professional rather than parental beings. The men's talk about career is around themes of expertise; achievement; self fulfilment; recognition – and even of ambitions of '*changing the world a bit*' from James – though he acknowledges that this has been subsumed by the aim of earning money for his family more recently. For many of these men work is described as a '*means to an end*' of supporting their families, as opposed to being central to their worlds and sense of self. Sam most strongly echoes a theme which many of these men claim is key to their identities: trying to find a balance between work and spending time with their families. This in fact is the path that I suggest is taken by most of the male participants. The alternative strategy, which two men seem to have taken, is to distance one's self from the role of 'worker' altogether and instead focus upon the alternative role of parent. The most extreme example of this is Adam's dismissal of career with comments such as '*career, I hate the word*' and '*I've never really seen myself as a 'career person*'. And he stresses that the ability to dismiss career and focus on parenting is facilitated by home-based telework. For Dan, the other man who seems to more closely identify as a parent than as a professional, telework is cited as bringing his priorities into perspective as well as enabling desires for more involved fatherhood.

There is also much discussion about the negative effects of telework on professional roles, both in the literature and in my data. Baruch (2000) claims that teleworkers are at risk of being 'out of sight (from Headquarters), ... out of mind (when promotion decisions are being taken)' (p37), which she proposes might lead to 'questionable job security' (p38). This fear is echoed by all of my participants, except for Kath, who prioritises her professional role; yet no concrete evidence of telework actually impairing career progression is offered by

any member of my sample group (apart from Sam's anecdote about turning down a well paid job in order to continue teleworking – but he presents this as wholly his choice). Owen et al (in Duxbury et al, 1998, p226) claim that teleworkers are at risk of becoming 'workaholics' as their levels of work intensify. Baruch (2000) also comments that in her research 'co-workers, who were left behind in the traditional office environment, reacted with 'suspicion, jealousy, or both' (p43). Intriguingly the talk of the women and the talk of the men, about how telework affects the professional role, is markedly different. For the female participants home-based telework seems to undermine their professional identities in three key ways. Firstly friends and family expect the women to be available to them in a social capacity when at home, which is reported as being a nuisance; and secondly they report an awareness of general suspicions that they are no longer dedicated to their work. This seems to lead to these women overcompensating by intensifying their work productivity in order to prove otherwise and show what they report as due gratitude to their employers. The third way in which women's professional selves seem to be undermined by telework is most clearly presented by Ruby who claims that since working from home she has become apathetic to her career, as I have mentioned previously, where she was once keen for promotion, the comfort of working from home has caused her to reassess her priorities in life. The most straightforward and desirable option for her, it seems, is to redirect her focus towards her role in her family.

The men express the impact of telework on their professional lives as twofold. Firstly in terms of a lack of visibility within their organisations, which they perceive as damaging their chances for promotion; and secondly, like the women, they too express an awareness of a general scepticism and suspicion towards them, which they seem to feel undermines their professional identities. The men suggest that if they are present in the home – or at the school gates – during standard office hours they become 'fair game' for claims of general laziness or even more suspicious behaviour. Those men who choose to focus upon their parental roles in their talk with me express a laissez-faire attitude towards such remarks, claiming not to care, as long as such suspicions do not stand in the way of them caring for their children.

The men, like the women I interviewed, also report that their work has intensified¹² since working from home, partly perhaps in response to such comments. But some state that this has had beneficial outcomes as their increases in productivity are met with positive recognition from their employers – an outcome that the female participants do not report. Two of the men also comment on the loss of visible signs of professionalism eg. having a big office and smart clothing, which once clearly signalled their professional status to others – signs which, they remark, are less available to them as teleworkers. To me the different perceptions noted by the participants toward male and female teleworkers (whilst these might just be those perceived by the participants themselves) provide a strong illustration of the different values that might be displayed towards men and women as parents and as professionals in our society on a daily basis.

Another key theme for the male participants, particularly those who do not prioritise either the professional or parental side of themselves, is the frustration they experience in trying to balance and reconcile these two roles. This is foreseen in the literature on telework – though this has not previously been reported as being specific to male teleworkers, which seems to be the case in my study. Duxbury et al (1998), for example, write of the contrasting messages that are given to the employee, their family, and the employer. For example, the employer believes that they will benefit from the worker's higher productivity, and the family believe that the employee will be more available to them. This, Duxbury et al (1998) claim, can leave teleworkers pulled in many directions or 'stretched out too thin' (Dwelly and Bennion, 2003, p27). Mann et al (2000) also note that resentment and anger might occur when work seems to dominate the home environment and family life; this is reflected in a report by James, that his teleworking has led to his wife taking their child out of the home when he is working, in order to not disturb him. Conversely it is also claimed that frustration and resentment might also be experienced due to the intrusion of family members into work time (Dwelly and Bennion, 2003). This is echoed by Sam who comments '*I think the main disadvantage [of telework] is your family*

¹² It should be noted that there is no verification of the claims of work intensification. Indeed the fact that they were being recorded for the purposes of this research, means that it is unsurprising that participants wanted to be seen as hard-working – as they may have been worried about their employers finding out if they had expressed otherwise

understanding that just because you work at home that, you know, I'm there for anything: 'come and do this' or 'come and do that', and that's the hardest thing is like saying that 'I'm at work'. I can handle it but I find the family don't understand just because I'm at home I can jump and do anything'.

Discourses utilised by parents in telework

Following an analysis of the empirical data collected, and a comparison of this to existing literature from relevant fields, I now present my overall thesis: that parents in telework can be seen to follow three 'paths' (borrowing this term from Gerson, in Arendell, 1997):

- 1) toward involved parenthood;
- 2) toward career prioritisation;
- 3) toward the prioritisation of neither of the above roles

Readers can refer to the previous chapter to see fig 4.18 which shows how I have roughly classified each participant under the three banners of prioritising the parental role, professional role or neither, which align with the three 'paths' presented above. Appendix 3 also summarises why I have categorised the participants as I have.

I furthermore propose that the discourses of parenthood which might be drawn upon by teleworkers are gendered, with women more likely to draw upon ideas of traditional motherhood when prioritising this role and men drawing upon ideas of being, what I label, 'new' fathers. Likewise discourses of career might also be thought of as gendered, with male teleworkers employing a discourse of traditional fatherhood to justify the prioritisation of their professional role and female teleworkers using a less conventional 'new' career woman discourse.

In terms of those men and women who do not seem to prioritise either role, they might be thought of as 'swinging' between the two polemic positions appropriate for their gender at various points in the interview (sometimes within short spaces

of time) but might also draw upon discourses of work life balance. This is illustrated in fig 5.1, below:

	Involved parenthood	Prioritising neither role	Career prioritisation
Teleworking mothers	Traditional mother	←Swinging→	'New' career woman
Teleworking fathers	'New' father	←Swinging→	Traditional father

Work life balance

Fig 5.1. Model summarising the discourses utilised by parents in telework

It is crucial to stress that this model is simply a device to make sense of how parents in telework might construct their identities. And whilst these five discourses: of traditional motherhood; traditional fatherhood; 'new' fatherhood; being a 'new' career woman; and of work life balance, are the overriding ones which I see as emerging from my data and the relevant literatures, the divisions might not be as rigid as they are constructed here (as seems to be inevitable with models of this nature) rather someone might situate themselves in different places on this model at different times – hence the additional category of 'swinging'. Furthermore, even within each of these 'boxes', the stories, strategies and outcomes for teleworkers are diverse, not one-dimensional – reflecting the

complexity of human behaviour. Some of this richness is captured below, where, in each section I go on to explore: who might utilise which discourse and why; what are the barriers or difficulties in adopting this discourse? How satisfied are these people with this discourse? And, crucially, how does telework interact with the reproduction of each discourse?

Paths toward involved parenthood

The first column of the model which illustrates my thesis (fig 5.1) is concerned with those who follow a path toward involved parenthood, in other words, those teleworking parents who prioritise their parental role consistently over their professional role. This aligns with the first column on the table from the previous chapter (fig 4.18), where those participants who I perceive as fitting this category can be seen. As I stress above, men and women taking this path might be seen to draw upon different discourses depending on their gender, which I represent on the model with the separate labels: traditional mother and 'new' father. This is reflected in the two sections below where I consider how each of these discourses is constructed and experienced by parents in telework.

Traditional mother

Three out of the seven women I interviewed seem to maintain an unequivocal focus on the parental role in their conversations with me, these are Anthea, Ruby and Sandra. To remind the reader, it is Anthea who comments '*I am very family-focused. It dominates my thinking, everything, so that's the sort of parent I am*'; Ruby remarks '*your children become an extension of you really*'; and Sandra states '*I'm not really career minded, I'm just a normal housewife who's got a full time job, with a nice family*'. I have labelled the discourse that these women might be seen as drawing upon as 'traditional' motherhood, as prioritising the parental role over an identity associated with paid employment seems to be a customary way for mothers to construct themselves. The literature I reviewed describes a well-established discourse of traditional motherhood which suggests that women are (or should be) the 'main' parents, constructing themselves as domestic and caring beings, in relation to their families. These three women

certainly seem to want to stress to me their commitment to this role, Anthea even goes as far as to paint herself as the main parent, responding to her family's needs, even when work requires her to be away from home:

'I would still organise everything around the kids, they'd go off to nursery, but I would get everything ready, I would ensure they were eating the right foods and so on and for when they came back from nursery everything would be laid out for them, so all my husband had to do was ferry them there and back, so although they weren't with me all day on a couple of days a week then, I was still there in the background, even though I wasn't there physically'.

This suggests that even when remote from her home, the domain of family life, her affiliation to this role is maintained 'virtually' – in much the same way that Kath is able to maintain her focus on her professional role despite being away from a traditional office due to telework.

I have already mentioned that none of the women I interviewed seem concerned to stress the care and affection elements of their parenting, which might be seen as central to constructions of traditional motherhood (Morgan, 1996), but I suggest that this might be due to this being such a taken for granted part of the sacred and reified discourse of 'good' motherhood. I have also already speculated why these three women might have opted for this path, suggesting that it might be related to their work being seen as less professional than some of the other teleworkers in this sample, either due to the occupational job role, or, in Anthea's case, because the work is part time – yet the other part time worker in my sample (who is also female: Helen) does not follow this path and so this might suggest otherwise. It is clear however that, for Ruby at least, telework acted as a catalyst in allowing her to reassess her priorities and prompt her to make parenthood a priority in her construction of self. For Anthea and Sandra it is seen to have enabled involved parenthood as it allows them more autonomy, flexibility, and in Sandra's case, confidence to do so. Whilst working mothers are often associated with feelings of guilt (Lupton, 1998) these three women do not express such feelings, rather telework seems to have afforded them a level of comfort and contentment with their preferred role as mothers in which they can feel that they are doing the '*right thing*' (Ruby's words). Whether this is a cause

for concern, in terms of women's social equality, is of course a matter for debate (a debate to which I will return later in this thesis), yet these women seem to speak with self-determination and present themselves as satisfied with their lives. Anthea is particularly reflective, articulating the dilemma for women, of whether to resign themselves to being '*just a mum*' (her words) or prioritise their career; and despite apparently seeing the double-standards evident in this struggle (in terms of how men and women meet different expectations from society), she still concludes that motherhood is '*the most important thing*' for her.

'New' father

This discourse parallels Gerson's 'path toward involved fatherhood' (in Arendell, 1997) and draws upon the terminology of the 'new man', which was popularised in the nineteen-eighties (Moir and Moir, 1998). Traditionally men are seen as peripheral participants in family life and central participants in paid work (to use the terminology of Lave and Wenger, 1991), whereas 'new men' are said to be more emotionally sensitive and do their fair share of the housework and childcare. All of the male teleworkers I interviewed express desires to be more involved fathers and two of the men go so far as to present themselves unequivocally as fathers, rather than as professionals. These are Adam and Dan. Adam states '*the family comes first and the work comes second*', and Dan comments '*I wouldn't swap him [his son] for the world, now I put obviously family before work*'.

Whereas Dan suggests that his decision to prioritise his parental role came about when his child was born, and was cemented when he was awarded sole custody of his son, Adam states '*whether that's the right way to do it or not, it's just the right way for me*'. Here he has clearly reflected on what might be considered the 'proper' level of involvement a father should have in parenting, and has determined to instead do what is right for himself in his own family circumstances. It is also important to remember the lack of affiliation Adam stresses in relation to his professional role, which might also have impacted on this decision.

Of the role of telework in these men's choices to prioritise their parental roles, Adam states: *'it just gives me so much more flexibility and the amount of time I can give to the family than if I was stuck in an office is something I would never want to give up now'* and Dan comments: *'you get to see more of your child and hopefully Daddy won't be just someone who popped to work in the morning, and came home at night, tucked you in bed'*. Both men present telework as facilitating their desires to be more involved fathers, and Dan is also seen here to be reflecting on a possible alternative image of more traditional and distant fatherhood, one which telework means he can avoid, and instead he is able to physically and emotionally be there for his son.

Adam and Dan both express their parental identities using sentimental terms such as of love and affection. This might be thought of as surprising, as emotion has historically been thought of as a feminine issue (Lupton, 1998). The male parental role, on the other hand, is more commonly perceived as distant and unemotional, and so the men may be using this discursive technique to signal to me that they do not conform to what they might view as an outmoded stereotype and instead are seen to fit with the 'new father' discourse of emotionally and physically involved parenting. The male participants describe having the chance to be more involved parents than perhaps their own fathers were, as a privilege and opportunity, afforded by telework, and hint that this is a recent generational change. Again it is a matter of debate, whether men's increased involvement in parenting signifies a move towards social equality of the genders and should be celebrated, but it is clear that home-based telework *can* enable this to occur, given favourable social and material circumstances (something I explore in more detail later in this chapter), but does not necessarily mean that this path will be the right one for all men, and indeed their families.

Paths toward career prioritisation

The right-hand column of the model (fig 5.1) is concerned with those who follow a path toward career prioritisation, ie. those teleworking parents who prioritise the professional role consistently over the parental role. This aligns with the right hand column on the table from the previous chapter (fig. 4.18). As I explain

above, men and women taking this path might be seen to draw upon different discourses, depending on their gender, which I represent on the model as the separate headings: 'new' career woman and traditional father. In the two sections that follow I consider each of these discourses, how they might be constructed and experienced by parents in telework. Readers may have realised that, in my sample, none of the participants demonstrate a singular and concerted alignment with the discourse of the 'traditional father', in other words none of the male participants clearly prioritise their professional roles over parenthood, therefore I can only speculate as to why this might be, and consider the relevance of this discourse to fathers in telework at the present time.

'New' career woman

Out of all of the fourteen home-based teleworkers in my sample group, only Kath presents herself as a 'career-primary individual' (Lorbel, 1991) in her interview with me. When asked if she sees herself more as a mother or as a professional, for example, she immediately replies '*as a European Resource Manager*'. Through her talk she seems to personify Grey's (1994) notion of 'career as project of the self', stating of her occupational role: '*I love what I do... it gives me what I need*'. Grey (1994, p482) describes that 'for these people work is not simply a job... instead work is a part of the entrepreneurial project of the self: a place where the self may become that which it truly is or desires to be'. Kath's achievement of her self-determined ambition is, of course, all the more remarkable because she is the mother of school-aged children, and so might be expected to conform to gender norms and view herself as a mother first and foremost.

Kath's embodiment of the professional role seems to take three discursive routes. Firstly, she seems to mark herself out as 'a professional' wherever and whenever possible in her interview, distinguishing herself from 'non-professional' people on several occasions; secondly, her professional identity is reinforced as she continually emphasises the investments she makes to her career in terms of time and commitment. In stressing just how busy she is, she can be seen to be articulating her value to the organisation and offers a story of both needing and being needed by the organisation - an emotional connection that she does not

articulate when discussing her family with me. This leads me to the third point: she describes her engagement with the parental role through what might be considered a masculine breadwinner discourse and I propose that this distancing of herself from the more usually feminine parental role is a key part of the arsenal with which she bolsters her professional identity.

Overall prioritising career over motherhood is a less conventional and more recently recognised path for women to pursue, therefore its social legitimacy might be considered precarious. This is recognised by McDowell (1997) who notes that existing ideas of dedicated professional women often have negative connotations, for example of being hard-nosed, a hangover perhaps from days when organisations were more overtly unwelcoming towards women at senior levels. The discourse I propose of the 'new' career woman is so called in recognition of the idea of the 'new' man which I discuss above. These discourses might be seen to compliment one another. As 'new' men are more willing to engage in parenthood and domestic work, so 'new' women might be enabled to focus more upon their careers – this certainly seems to be the case for Gary and Kath. Yet it is interesting to note that whilst the discourse of the 'new' man became popularised and fell into relatively common usage, the term 'new' woman is not popularly established. This is therefore a tentative discourse, the construction of which is less fixed and certain than the others I have proposed. This might explain why Kath seems to take a hybridised approach in situating herself within this discourse – drawing both upon traditional ways of talking about motherhood to describe her career and traditionally male talk about breadwinning, as well as organisational jargon, to construct herself as a parent. It is important to stress here that Kath provides the only example from my sample of conforming to what I have labelled a 'new' career woman, and it is therefore conceivable, indeed likely, that other women might construct themselves differently when taking this path, and might also experience it differently.

Traditional father

A traditional image of fathers is of emotionally distant, often absent, breadwinners (Gerson in Arendell, 1997). And whilst this discourse, and in particular the idea of breadwinning, seems to be recognised by the male

participants in my sample, it is not seen to be embodied fully by any of them. None of the men report themselves as detached parents, indeed all express either being 'hands on' parents already or having desires to be more involved in family life, which have not (yet) been fully realised. I propose that there are three reasons why none of the men in my sample group adhere to the traditional image of fathers prioritising their professional role over their parental role in their constructions of self. First of all this image might be outmoded and not a true representation of fatherhood in the 21st century (if indeed it ever was). This aligns with the proposal by the participants themselves that being more involved fathers is not a path that was available to their fathers and the generations before them. Secondly it might be the case that men who have taken the path towards traditional fatherhood would not desire to engage in home-based telework, preferring instead to work outside of the home, where their professional selves can more easily be publicly fore-fronted, these men, therefore are not included in my sample (which consists only of home-based teleworkers). Kath's adoption of a strong professional identity whilst also being a home-based teleworker, however suggests that this is not beyond the bounds of possibility (even for a woman!). In other words it is still conceptually possible that a discourse of traditional fatherhood, and the prioritisation of career, is available to male teleworking parents, despite none of the participants in my sample opting for this – and therefore I feel that its inclusion on the model (fig 5.1) is justified. The third reason I suggest, for men not presenting themselves as traditional fathers in their interviews with me, is precisely their apprehension to draw upon such discourses with me, a female researcher, who they have never met before, as they are unsure of my political allegiance and therefore what my reaction will be to, what might be viewed, as a conservative or outdated mode of parenting. This methodological issue, along with other limitations and indeed strengths of my methodology, will be considered further in the concluding chapter.

Prioritising neither role

It seems that in my sample it is more common for participants not to prioritise either the parental or the professional role, in other words, prioritising neither role - this aligns with the middle column on the table (fig 4.18) from the previous

chapter. I propose that in order to do so they 'swing' between the gender appropriate discourses about parenting and those concerning career, which I describe above. Additionally participants prioritising neither role are seen to draw upon a discourse of 'work life balance' – though less frequently than might have been expected. Indeed 'swinging' between all three discourses that might be available for one's gender: those of parenting, career and of work life balance, is evident in the narratives of my participants, regardless of whether the individual demonstrates an overall priority of their parental, professional role or neither, suggesting that all three discourses are relevant and accessible to parents in telework. Maintaining a focus on one role consistently is less commonly observed amongst my participants, which seems to suggest that this might be a less straightforward, or desirable, option. The 'work' involved in making a clear priority of one role above the other, and indeed of attempting to balance the two, is discussed in the following section, as well as the costs and rewards of telework for parents taking each of these paths. Here though I focus on describing the discourse of work life balance and exploring its relevance to my participants (I shall elaborate further on the idea of 'swinging' between roles in later sections of this chapter).

Analysis of the data collected suggests that mothers and fathers in telework who follow a path of prioritising neither the parental or the professional role - particularly those who seem to be striving for some kind of 'balance' – might experience negative emotions; this is seen to be the case for half of those who prioritise neither role in my sample. Furthermore the nature of these emotions seems to be gendered. For the women who find themselves in the nexus between the roles of parent and professional, unable or unwilling to prioritise either, the outcome seems to be feelings of guilt; and for the men, the outcome seems to be expressed more as tension and frustration. I must stress however that not all of my participants express these negative emotions, and I cannot say that all parents in telework will experience this path negatively.

I must also stress here that I have not been able to neatly divide those individuals who prioritise neither the parental nor the professional role in my sample, into the categories of 'balancers' and 'swingers'. The distinction in this case is simply not clear cut enough, and whilst I appreciate that this might be considered rather

untidily analytically I believe that this is simply emblematic of the reality that people will not fit neatly into boxes. This suggests that the model I have constructed (fig 5.1) is not entirely robust – yet what model does exist that can faultlessly represent the complexity of human behaviour in a given context? I feel strongly that these categorisations are useful all the same in providing a framework for making some sense of the experiences of parents in telework. I will reflect further upon this issue, which is clearly a limitation of the current research project (and perhaps of all projects which explore some aspect of human activity) in the final chapter.

Work life balance

Explicit reference to the discourse of work life balance occurs relatively infrequently in the talk of the teleworkers I interviewed, which is surprising considering that this is claimed to be a goal of all forms of flexible working in much the literature I have reviewed. Perhaps this is because ‘balance’ is a rather abstract idea, a metaphor, which invites men and women to quantify and rationalise their engagement both in work and in family life (Caproni, 2004) when in reality both spheres defy the cold logic of such examination by those within them, despite these ways of talking being common amongst academics ‘looking in’. It could be argued, however, that ideas of balance are implicit in a refusal to prioritise either the parental or professional role and instead swing between the two (this further explains why it has been impossible to split the ‘swingers’ from the ‘balancers’).

Existing research on flexible forms of work suggests that there is a common understanding amongst employers that it is women who need assistance in managing their work life balance (Brannen et al, 1994). It is interesting then that explicit reference to ideas of balance is made more frequently by the male participants than by the women I interviewed, and five of the male participants do not seem to prioritise either their professional or parental self – which is by far the most popular strategy for the teleworking fathers in my sample - whereas only three of the women I interviewed seem not to prioritise either role. James and Sam typify the frustration which I propose is experienced by some fathers in this

situation, while Gary, Ken and Magnus also refuse, or seem unable, to prioritise either career or parenthood.

There are three women in my sample who are seen to clearly prioritise neither the parental or professional role. Barbara and Tina explicitly express guilt and/or self reproach about this, whilst Helen also refuses to prioritise either her parental or professional self. The negative effects of prioritising neither the parental or professional role for these men and women (which I discuss in detail in subsequent sections) suggest that, for some people, telework is more of a poison chalice than a 'no strings' gift from their employer. The offering of flexible working options does indeed seem to be understood by my participants as an exchange relationship (Blau, 1964), yet, the 'over-compensating' (ie. engaging in work more than they would in a traditional office) reported, largely by the female participants, suggests that the balance of power lies more with the organisation, and this seems to render the achievement of satisfactory balance between work and family roles elusive for many teleworkers.

Summary

I have therefore identified five key discourses drawn upon by parents in their constructions of self in home-based telework:

1. traditional mother;
2. 'new' father;
3. 'new' career woman;
4. traditional father; and
5. work life balance.

Furthermore I propose that the identity-related 'actions' of parents in telework might be classed as:

- **Persisting** – continuing to prioritise the role traditionally considered appropriate for one's gender (ie. parenthood for women and career for men) – in blue on the model below (fig 5.2)

- **Resisting** – resisting the role traditionally considered appropriate for one's gender (ie. male resisters would follow the path of involved parenting and female resisters would prioritise career) – in pink on the model below
- **Balancing** – attempting to prioritise both the parental and professional role at the same time – in yellow on the model below
- **Swinging** – attempting to prioritise both the parental and professional role at different times – in green on the model below

	Involved parenthood	Prioritising neither role	Career prioritisation
Teleworking mothers	Persisting Traditional mother	←Swinging→	Resisting 'New' career woman
Teleworking fathers	Resisting 'New' father	Balancing Work life balance	Persisting Traditional father

Fig 5.2. Model summarising the actions adopted by parents in telework

Resultantly parents in telework might themselves be classed as: persisters; resisters; balancers; and swingers¹³. The model above (fig 5.2) builds upon fig 5.1, to concisely illustrate this. Again I stress that parents in telework are unlikely

¹³ Whilst I am aware of the double meaning that this term might imply I prefer this phrase to any synonym which might come to mind, as 'swinging', to me, is the most pertinent metaphor to represent the action of these participants – and if this implies infidelity then it is of course only to those alternative discourses which they might have drawn upon in their constructions of self - indeed the idea of a failure to commit to just one party is relevant here

to consistently draw upon just one of these discourses or engage with just one of these actions. Indeed the action I have most commonly observed amongst my sample is to 'swing' and it is probable that in telework discourses of career, of parenting, and of balance will all feature in constructions of self by parents. Below I consider the reasons why people might either embrace or reject the discourse which has traditionally been seen as appropriate for their gender (ie. why they might 'persist' or 'resist'), as well as elaborating further upon the distinction between 'balancing' and 'swinging', as I discuss the identity-related work, costs and rewards of telework for parents.

The identity work involved in telework and the costs/rewards

I consider here how parents in home-based telework marshal¹⁴ the discourses available to them in order to cope when these messages might be disrupted or rendered less accessible by this form of work. As Fineman (2008, p5 and 6) neatly summarises:

'Identity is more than a static, self-classifactory niche. It is a process of holding and resolving different social-emotional narratives about who we are, who we were, and who we wish to be... identity work leads to the conclusion that identity, rather than being a fixed 'thing', is a continuous socio-emotional process of becoming'.

In keeping with this social constructionist philosophy, by 'identity work' I am referring specifically to the discursive techniques employed in order to produce a satisfactory identity. These techniques might include the utilisation, suppression or subversion of dominant discourses, as well as the management of emotion in an attempt to achieve tenure in the desired role (other techniques such as the arrangement of artefacts, physical space and time might also be relevant here, but will receive less attention as they are not the main focus of the present study and therefore such detail was not actively sought in the interviews – though such elements are likely to make a useful further contribution to these debates and

¹⁴ Thanks to Steve Fineman for providing this apposite phrase on his reading of some of my earlier work

therefore might be the focus of future research). Specifically, I discuss here the discursive identity-related work that parents in telework might engage in, in order to either *persist* in the role that is seen as traditional for their gender or *resist* this; or to strive for work life *balance* or *swing* between the polemic positions of parent and professional, in their constructions of self. I propose that there is undoubtedly work involved in each of these choices, but here I question what form this takes and which option might necessitate the most effort from teleworking mothers and fathers. I will discuss the various strategies which participants seem to use to resist pulls toward non-desired roles as well as the strategies which are used to enhance or support moves toward desired roles. I will also, of course, consider how home-based telework interplays with all of this, which I summarise at the end of this section.

Readers are furthermore invited here to compare the work that might be involved in each of these 'actions' to the various costs and rewards of telework, for those performing it, and for relevant others. I propose that this discussion will be useful to management practitioners; academics studying telework; as well as teleworkers (or potential teleworkers) themselves and their families.

Persisting and Resisting in Telework

I begin by considering those teleworkers who persist in constructing themselves within the role traditionally considered to be the most appropriate for their gender. In my sample this is limited to those women who construct themselves primarily as mothers rather than as professionals, as none of the men take what might be seen as their traditional path, of prioritising their professional role clearly over fatherhood.

The women who prioritise their parental roles in their interviews with me seem to have been pulled toward this role by traditional discourses which suggest that the mother should be the main parent, but I propose that they might also have experienced a push away from the professional role, which might still be seen as unwelcoming to women (see Kanter, 1977) – this is reflected in the lack of acknowledgement that the teleworking women report receiving of their

professional roles from their friends and families, who seem to regard them as available for socialising when in the home. This might mean that, in turn, a distance is created between these women and corporate discourses, including those of career prioritisation and of work life balance, which they seem able to resist.

Telework is seen to both facilitate women's reported desires to inhabit the parental role, and, in the case of Ruby, acts as a catalyst in tempering desires for professional achievement. Of paid work she states *'I am now quite happy to stay as I am and mull along and continue what I'm doing'* and Sandra remarks *'it's a lot less stressful at home'*; *'I'm quite happy with what I'm doing, I'm quite comfortable'*. 'Compensation theory' (Champoux, 1978, Staines, 1980) might explain why these two women maintain a focus on the parental role because, as the literature suggests, women find the culture of corporate organisations alien and unwelcoming to the feminine (see Kanter, 1977). It might in fact be disillusionment in the professional role (or in Sandra's case not even entertaining the idea that she could ever be a career-orientated person) that has driven these women, by default, to their primary occupation with their familial roles – the alternative simply might not be culturally available to them. Through this logic, however, Anthea's engagement with the traditional mother role might be seen as an anomaly. Her role as a journalist surely necessitates engagement with the professional sphere, and her university education suggests a possible class difference between her, and council workers Sandra and Ruby (though there is of course no objective assessment available to 'prove' this). It is intriguing then that women of seemingly different class backgrounds and professional standing would choose to present themselves through the same discourse, of involved motherhood. And this belies any sweeping analysis as to why this might be.

I find Sandra's statement *'I'm not really career minded, I'm just a normal housewife who's got a full time job, with a nice family'* particularly interesting. This seems to me to represent a classic example of what El Sawad et al (2004) might describe as 'doublethink'. The Orwellian idea of doublethink refers to a specific kind of contradiction – an example of incoherency that the speaker lets go by without obvious discomfort and does not seek to correct. This is contrary to what theorists of identity have previously stressed about people being

uncomfortable with inconsistency and seeking to resolve it whenever it occurs. El Sawad et al (2004) explain that different roles 'may have their own coherent logics, if put together they are contradictory' (p1196). When Sandra states that she is '*just a normal housewife who's got a full time job*' it seems to me that she is attempting to downplay the professional part of her self in order that she might continue to prioritise the overarching parental / domestic idiom. El Sawad et al (2004) suggest that doublethink and other forms of contradiction are most likely to occur when multiple roles are held simultaneously – such as the parental and professional which might be equally appropriate in home-based teleworking contexts.

It could be argued that individuals need to be particularly driven to resist discourses of work life balance and create a coherent 'singular' self in a context where the temptation to try to be successful in the two roles, of parent and professional, might be seen as achievable and appropriate. Indeed the prioritisation of neither role, and seemingly the pursuit of work life balance is seen to be the most attractive option, drawing the majority of my sample group. Those women who persist in prioritising their traditional role as parents, even when engaging in paid employment, might have to work at understating the professional elements of their identity in order to celebrate those aspects of themselves associated with parenting. However, this does not seem to be an overly demanding or painful a task for the mothers I interviewed - these women present themselves as satisfied with their lives and the role of telework in enabling them to prioritise their parental selves, they certainly do not present themselves as racked with guilt or lacking self worth. Discourses of professionalism seem to be less available to women in telework any way – unless, as seems to be the case with Kath, an extremely determined effort is made to embody these - and mechanisms such as doublethink can allow these women to simultaneously acknowledge and downplay their professional roles, as in the pertinent example from Sandra above.

The talk of the participants overall suggests an awareness of the traditional discourses of gendered parenting (that the mother is the main parent and the father a detached breadwinner), which suggests that these are still culturally relevant for this group of teleworking parents. Both male and female participants

discuss the resonance of these 'messages' but on occasion describe attempts to resist them. Tina for example, at the times she prioritises her professional self, comments that this is not something that people want to hear from a woman who also has children. And Sam comments on the pull toward professional ambition, even though he chooses to try to find a balance between this and spending time with his family. Kath provides a stark example of resisting the idea of traditional motherhood as she instead prioritises the professional role in her talk with me. This leads me to consider those in my sample who can be seen to resist the pull toward prioritising the role that is most expected for their gender, ie. Kath, the mother who prioritises her professional role, as well as Dan and Adam, the men who prioritise their parental roles with me. It is often through such examples of resistance that one can glimpse the wider implications of changing social conditions and such instances might even be considered to point to the liberating potential of telework because, as Sartre notes, 'freedom is that small movement which makes a totally conditioned human being someone who does not render back completely what conditioning has given him (sic) (1969 in Billig et al, 1988).

It seems to me that Kath is pulled to inhabit the professional role by corporate discourses which propose that career can become 'a project of the self' (Grey, 1994) and through subtle disciplinary mechanisms (Fournier, 1999) might provide a sense of meaning, achievement and belonging (Wilmott, 1993). But I propose that she might also have been pushed away from the parental discourses traditional for her gender, due to the impossibility of living up to the idealised images of motherhood that remain prevalent in society today. Grey (1994, p482) proposes that 'the pursuit of career can involve the displacement of all other values, goals and relationships' but Kath does not deny a parental role in her talk with me, instead she seems to formulate her engagement in this role through a discourse of breadwinning, repeatedly stressing the financial input that her work provides for her family, as well as the moral example she sets by demonstrating her strong work ethic. She performs her identity overall through a 'masculine' script of professionalism more commonly associated with the workplace and she employs organisational jargon even when describing her family life. When she describes her parenting she does so in terms of '*managing*' and '*scheduling*', reflecting a rationalised and organised approach and indicating the 'professionalisation' of her family life.

Campbell Clark (2000, p759) draws on Lave and Wenger's (1991) conceptualisation of a 'central participant' of a role, describing a central participant as having 'internalised the domain's culture, including learning the language and internalising the domains language' – this might explain why Kath, whose affiliations are clearly with the professional domain, uses language more commonly heard in the corporate world even to describe her family life. One view would be that she has simply internalised this language and uses it without thinking, alternatively, I would suggest, she may use such terms deliberately with me in order to stress to me her 'central identification' with her career. It might also be relevant that in the workplace, competence is generally associated with emotional detachment – the suppression of emotion is the hallmark of a true professional (Harris, 2002). There is of course a danger that this lack of emotionality, when talking about her family, might make her appear cold, yet this is not something that Kath does dwell upon with me.

As well as the discursive techniques Kath uses with me to present herself as a professional, she also describes the practical aspects of being a career-centric teleworking mother. This entails the engagement a complex regimented support network of family, friends, and paid helpers, in order to manage childcare and domestic work – aspects of home life that many working mothers might still view as being directly their responsibility. Kath demonstrates, though that her responsibility is not shirked, it is fulfilled as she co-ordinates the 'outsourcing' (Hochschild, 2005) of these tasks. It is important to note that telework has also indirectly supported Kath to achieve her desired focus on the professional role, as Gary, her teleworking husband, is more available than other husbands might be, and can support his wife in a similar (albeit much reduced) way that wives have traditionally been seen do for their working husbands, by performing school runs and unpacking shopping.

Telework is seen to allow Kath to organise her family around her work, rather than her work around her family, as might be expected of a mother of school age children. It can therefore be seen as also enabling her access to discourses and practices more commonly associated with working fathers (such as breadwinning) as well as using strong emotional language, more often

associated with motherhood, to describe her career. I propose that the juggling of these discourses is key part of her identity work as a teleworking mother prioritising the professional role. Perhaps Kath feels she has little choice but to adopt the traditional, masculine professional script more commonly associated with fatherhood, lest she be consumed by the feminised caring discourse of motherhood. And yet, one might see Kath's adoption of such a masculine discourse as compromising her emotional approach to motherhood, because the dominant cultural expectation in our society is that women will, and perhaps should, put their family first at all times.

Further examples of the discursive work Kath puts into her desire to be seen as a successful career woman might be derived from her keenness to mark herself as somehow more 'professional' than other people throughout her interview with me and in how she stresses the time and effort she commits to her career. I feel it is also important to note the work that seems to be required by her family, her daughter, for example, is reported as having to make excuses for her mother when she is late to collect them from school, apparently commenting: "*Mum's on a call*" and "*she'll be late because she's on a conference call*". And, as previously mentioned, her husband Gary's increased presence, which ironically is due to his own teleworking, and crucially his willingness to be more involved in childcare and domestic work, facilitates her achievement of presenting a convincing and coherently professional self.

Kath certainly does not present a sentimental story of motherhood as might be more commonly associated with women. What I personally find most striking about her narrative is that she makes no apology for prioritising her career over her role as a parent, presenting no feelings of guilt, and apparently refusing to conform to the expected apologetic notions of working mothers. She presents no regrets in relation to the lack of time she has available to spend with her children because of her career, something that other participants, male and female, did articulate. In sum I can only speculate as to why Kath decided to prioritise the professional role in her interview with me. One explanation would be that she has been seduced more by discourses of capitalism than by discourses of patriarchy. She 'betrays' her traditional gender role in order to satisfy her desires for acceptance in the corporate domain. Hochschild (2001) concludes from her own

research on working mothers, that it seems the roles of home and work have reversed: work is now offering stimulation, guidance, and a sense of belonging to women, while home has become the place in which there is too much to do in too little time. Another explanation is the afore mentioned 'compensation theory' (Champoux, 1978, Staines, 1980), which proposes that disillusionment in one domain might cause someone to seek acceptance in another. The 'sacred' and idealised image of motherhood, that the literature proposes is wide-spread, sets unachievably high expectations for women. It is easy to see how this might lead to women feeling inadequate, and therefore seeking feelings of worth elsewhere, and the corporate world of professional work is an obvious domain that may offer this solution. As Kath comments: *'it gives me what I need'*.

To consider those men who prioritise the parental role in their interviews with me. Dan and Adam seem to find it relatively easy to ignore the pull to present purely professional selves, and telework might have been key in enabling this resistance, as their presence in their local communities during working hours reduces the likelihood of them being recognised as legitimate professional beings, and might indeed have pushed them further towards the parental role. Adam in particular works hard to downplay the professional role, engaging in anti-careerist language. And both he and Dan claim not to care when they are not recognised as professionals by neighbours and those in their communities, due to their engagement in telework. They also do not present themselves as overly concerned at the lack of visibility that telework can create, potentially damaging their careers, as long as telework affords them the time to be with their children.

When talking about their children they are seen to 'borrow' articulations of care and love from feminine discourses of parenting and it could be argued that this puts them in danger of 'diminished manhood' (Kimmel, 1993), yet I suggest that their use of feminised discourses does not threaten to subsume other aspects of their identities, as Kath's use of such discourses might. Their struggle is probably made easier because the 'new man' discourse facilitates this, and even rewards, the performance of such an identity. Either way, Kath finds no firmly established or positively accepted 'new woman' discourse on which to draw or with which to engage as she resists her traditional gender path. This raises the interesting

issue of why such a discourse is not available to women, and leads me to ask what the costs of this absence might be. For Kath, the professional armour that is so prevalent in her interview data, leads to a gender atypical engagement with both career and parenting. To appear convincing as a professional, it seems necessary for her to reject wholeheartedly the typical female oriented discourse of care, and the emotional struggles commonly associated with women in work contexts.

Dan's struggle to achieve and maintain a strong parental identity may have been made easier because of the absence of a significant female other or 'emotional competitor' in his and his son's everyday lived experience. Dan is the only single parent in the group, and his circumstances as a lone father, as well as having the financial means available to hire help with his child care, seem to have opened up the possibilities for him to physically and emotionally engage with fatherhood, because, I propose, an au pair is unlikely to compete in the same way a mother might to be the main provider of emotional care for a child. The absence of a significant female other in his life means that there is little challenge to Dan occupying the traditionally feminine persona of 'main parent'. Adam's spouse is not currently in paid employment, and so it is interesting that he has found that he has been able to adopt a family centric role, when one might expect 'competition' for this position from his wife.

Intriguingly those who forge an identity under the discourse more commonly associated with the opposite gender – ie. Kath, who presents a professional self and Adam and Dan who present themselves as fathers – actually seem to experience relatively few personal costs for what might be seen as a refusal to conform to societies traditional expectations for them: all three present themselves as satisfied with their choices in life, not torn and guilt-ridden as one might expect. Whether there is a longer term cost to Kath, or indeed to Dan and Adam, I cannot say, but I propose that in the realm of parenting men currently might be said to occupy a 'win win' situation which women generally do not: if men become more involved parents this new take on male identity is likely to be seen as commendable, yet if women prioritise their careers they may be seen as unemotional - even heartless, and possibly less feminine. Yet if women prioritise

the raising of children they can be constructed as unambitious, perhaps lazy, and old-fashioned.

I see 'resisters' such as Kath, Dan and Adam as real and important examples of home-based teleworkers struggling against the tensions and contradictions inherent in the discourses associated with the social and cultural stereotypes of working parents. Earlier in this thesis I proposed that resistance of dominant discourses is restricted to those with significant cultural power or to times of momentous social change. The struggles of these three teleworkers are therefore important indicators of the possibilities inherent in home-based telework for individual change, and are perhaps even significant indicators of wider social change.

Balancing and Swinging in Telework

To begin this section, some further elaboration on the idea of 'swinging' is required. As well as sometimes explicitly drawing upon discourses of work life balance (the action I have labelled as 'balancing'), participants, both male and female, are seen to often change their priority from the parental to the professional role and vice versa, often within a short space of time during the interviews, and appear to 'swing' between the polemic positions I have proposed for their gender (so for men, between traditional fatherhood and 'new' fatherhood; and for women, between traditional motherhood and 'new' career woman). An example of a female participant doing this is Helen who initially describes her career as *'something I enjoy a lot, it's something I'm trained for, you know, specialised, taken a lot of time to specialise in'* which suggests a high level of dedication to the professional role, yet in a later quote she explains that her career aims have been tempered by what seems to be her desire to put her children first:

'I'm happy with what I'm doing at the moment, because I have children, I would have very different aims if I didn't have children, so I'm happy with how things are going at the moment, and that's good enough really, right now'.

The conclusion she reports, that this is '*good enough really, right now*' hints at unfulfilled ambitions in her professional life and perhaps a certain ambivalence towards her career at the present time, seemingly because she is currently a mother of young children who demand more from her in terms of attention, time and energy¹⁵.

An example of a male participant seeming to swing is Gary. At times in his interview he presents himself as very much a traditional father, speaking of the investments he has made in his career and how he is keen not to allow his children to interfere with his 'work time'. He also presents the closest image of all the men of a traditional breadwinner stating that this concept is all about earning '*as much money as possible to look after the family*'. Yet at other times Gary describes how telework has enabled him to play a much more active role in his family, supporting his wife Kath in terms of their domestic arrangements, and being more involved as a father. I interpret this as Gary swinging between the discourse of traditional fatherhood and the more involved 'new' father discourse and it also seems that in his case it has been telework that has afforded him access to this 'new' form of fatherhood which might have been out of reach to him when he was in traditional, office-based work.

Magnus, the oldest male participant, seems to me to be one of the most reflective of all the participants – this might be due to the fact that he has experienced fatherhood in two different eras, with two different women – being now in his second marriage, with young children; and his children from his previous marriage are now grown up. On one occasion he presents a traditional perspective on fatherhood, admitting that he finds life easier when his wife is around to take responsibility for their children – yet reflects that this might be somewhat '*unreasonable*' in the present time. On another occasion he reports that he feels obliged to introduce himself to other people in terms of what he does for a living, rather than whether he has children – yet again though, he reflects that he only does this as he sees this as the expectation and convention for men. Magnus therefore appears to be in a quandary as to where to situate

¹⁵ certainly observing her teaching her 2 year old son to eat soup prior to her interview with me, whilst being heavily pregnant herself, gave me this impression.

himself between the two seemingly opposing discourses of traditional and 'new' fatherhood, and therefore appears to swing between these at various times in his interview with me, both being appropriate on occasion, but neither fully matching his view of himself as a parent or indeed as a professional. Perhaps then, as I proposed earlier, the supposedly solid distinction between 'a traditional father' and 'an involved father' does not hold true in 'real life', and maybe in the domain of telework in particular, the boundaries between the two are not so clearly defined. Such discourses appear in this view merely as constructs – though this does not suggest that their power to shape lives and behaviours is diminished.

Overall, not prioritising either the parental or the professional role seems to be the most common stance for the teleworking parents I interviewed. This suggests that making a clear and determined choice, either to embody one's traditional gender role or to embody the role less traditional for one's gender, might be difficult. But my findings paint a different picture and in fact suggest that those who make a clear choice to focus on one or other of the parental or professional role – regardless of whether this meets with traditional gender norms – often experience this as more satisfactory than those who make neither role a priority, apparently seeking instead to balance, or swing between, the two. In this case emotional costs are evident: some of the men who do not clearly focus on either role report frustrations and/or feelings of inadequacy and some of the women who do not prioritise either role describe experiencing guilt – sometimes this is due to neglecting work to attend to personal or family matters, and sometimes is due to the buffering of family demands so that a focus can be maintained upon the paid working role, as can be seen in the examples presented below.

When I ask James whether he sees himself more as a father or as a professional he responds '*I think that for me the two are always in conflict, I don't feel I'm doing as well in either role as I'd like to*'. And when I enquire about the role of home-based telework in this he replies '*I think it increases the conflict to be honest, partly because it's made it more immediate*'. So it is clear that for James telework has not been the facilitator of balance that it is promised to be in much of the literature rather it has rendered him even more torn between the two roles. Sam also comments that it is hard to balance the roles of parent and professional in telework and also expresses frustration:

'When you're busy, which you know is quite often, and your children and your wife are at home, I've got to be honest, it's a nightmare, they can disturb your work and I get very frustrated and somebody's shouting and screaming downstairs and I'm busy'.

The idea of guilt is commonly associated with working mothers in our society and in the data collected guilt is expressed in relation to both parental and professional roles. Barbara reflects *'My Mum always stayed at home when we were young, and I always said that I would go to work cos I was never very maternal and sometimes I feel, sometimes you feel guilty about it but I think that overall I provide my children with a wide range of experiences'*. So in this case telework, in allowing Barbara to work, as well as stay at home, might be seen to lessen the guilt that is often associated with working mothers. Tina also reproaches herself about what she seems to see as her shortcomings as a mother:

Tina - I'm not a very good mother I don't think

Me -Why's that?

Tina – Cos if I were busy and it were 3 o'clock, coming home from school time, and it were raining, I'll just think 'oh they'll get wet!' I don't think 'oh it's raining I'll have to go and fetch them'

She also reports that she feels compelled to perform extra work, seemingly in gratitude to her employer for being able to work from home, which means that she is unable to dedicate this time to the parental role:

'Some people might think, 'oh I'll go and put washing out', or 'I'll go and start getting tea ready' but unfortunately I'm not like that, I overcompensate working from home, so I would make them [her family] have their tea later rather than do that, cos I don't feel... somebody's paying me to do some work and that is what I'm doing, I work for them'.

Theorists (for example Baruch, 2000, Shumante and Fulk, 2004) have suggested that ontological security is to be found in maintaining the boundaries of roles and

in creating one's self in a coherent and consistent manner within recognisable and straightforward confines. And so this goes some way to explaining why people who do not (or cannot) fit neatly into a specific role might find themselves experiencing tensions - but what this fails to explain is why the men and women I interviewed continue to place themselves in a nexus between the two roles of parent and professional when this evidently causes what might be seen as conflicts between different selves. Is this simply a 'to be expected' (and tolerated) by-product of home-based telework? Or are there other reasons why these individuals remain in this seemingly painful position?

One explanation might be that discourses of work life balance are powerful and seductive. It is likely that these discourses, which make promises of the possibility of 'having it all' to both sexes, are likely to have drawn many individuals to adopt flexible working options, such as home-based telework, and so their pre-existing desires to engage harmoniously with both roles remain, even though, it seems, for some, that such modes of work in fact lead the major roles in their lives to conflict, rather than balance. Caproni (2004) suggests that implicit in discourses of work life balance is the myth that an individual is able to both rationalise and control the spheres of work and home. My finding, that many teleworkers present their realities as messy and at times frustrating, provides a challenge to this myth. And the finding that individuals continue employing home-based telework, even when it seems to bring little benefit to them (in terms of producing satisfactory identities), hints at differential outcomes for employer and employee as well as an imbalance of power between organisations and individuals.

Social identity theorist, Turner (1982), proposes that different situations create the opportunity to 'switch on' different social identities. In these terms home-based telework can be viewed as a context where the roles of parent or of professional might both come into play. But Oakes (1987) stresses that the likelihood of roles being embodied is 'a function of accessibility and fit'. Home-based telework, by its nature, allows physical, or at least virtual, accessibility to the domains of both work and home, but this might not, necessarily, also enable unrestricted or easy access to the roles of professional and parent – or indeed imply a comfortable 'fit'. I propose that those men and women who prioritise

neither the parental or professional role in their interviews with me might desire alternative roles but, on finding that they are unable to inhabit these, for whatever reason, they become stuck by default in this transitory position, swinging between the two roles but not wholly embodying either. For James and Sam, for example, I suggest that this is an accurate analysis of their situation, as they both express desires to be more engaged in the parental role, but seem to have found that barriers exist to prevent them from fully achieving this.

Campbell Clark (2000, p760) proposes that when an individual identifies with a domain 'they want to shape it in a way that allows them to contribute and excel'. It might be that Sam and James' wives are acting as gatekeepers or 'border-keepers' (Campbell Clark, 2000), not allowing this to happen, as they expect the domain of home, and family life in general, to remain under their control, and expect their husbands to conform to the traditional distant breadwinner identity, and not threaten their own traditional identity as main parents – though I stress there is no data to support this idea. It might be that these men have the desire, but not the all-important access and influence, needed to wholly and satisfactorily engage with the parental role – which forces them to remain in an unresolved nexus between two roles where, as Campbell Clark (2000, p757) comments, individuals 'might easily slip into a sort of schizophrenia about their identity and purpose'. Higgins et al (1994) argue that men are thought to traditionally have more control over their time than women and are expected to be the ones with more power in the both the domains of work and home. They claim that as a result 'balancing work and family is clearly more problematic for mothers than for fathers' (p149). If the 'gatekeeper' thesis outlined above is the case, this suggests that it might in fact be women who have more control over the home sphere – at least in these specific cases - and this might also defy the logic that men will find the achievement of work life balance easier than women in such scenarios.

Alternatively these men might continue to have a strong attachment to the professional role, which perhaps means that they simply do not have enough ontological 'space' to wholly embody the parental role as well – they therefore oscillate between prioritising the parental and professional role as they feel strong pulls toward both: discourses of traditional fatherhood persuade them to

cling to the notion that they must prioritise their careers in order to be good fathers, whereas the discourse of the 'new' man downplays financial provision, instead stressing that fathers must now be physically and emotionally available to their children. I propose that this represents a wider social dilemma for men, which resonates more with this generation of fathers than ever before (but which is a struggle that working mothers have had to face for many decades). It is no wonder then that many men have recently been tempted to telework, which promises to allow them to achieve all of these elements of being a 'good' father. However the experiences of Sam and James suggest that telework can fail to live up to this promise.

Whatever the explanation, this lack of achievement of desired roles can be seen to lead to emotionally painful consequences for these men and they blame home-based telework for magnifying such feelings of tension by increasing the immediacy of these two 'greedy' roles, as they are forced together to exist in such close temporal and spatial proximity. Paradoxically they also, at times applaud telework for the flexibility it affords them, allowing them to be able to spend extra time with their children – revealing telework as a double-edged experience for these men. This also provides a further example of participants expressing contradictory views in a short space of time, both praising and deriding telework, proposing that it is both a blessing and a curse in terms of allowing them to fulfil their identity-related ambitions. Indeed it might be experienced as both, at various times and from various perspectives. The two dominant forms of fatherhood, suggested by the opposing discourses of the traditional and 'new' father – 'hats' which these men wear at different points in their interviews with me - are likely to differently inform whether telework is a good or a bad thing and would account for the apparently incongruous views reported by these men.

I also propose that the women in my sample group who prioritise neither role, seem better equipped to cope with such tensions, because, to them, this is a well-rehearsed stand point. Working mothers have, for many years, had to deal with the paradox of having a need or desire to engage in paid work, whilst dominant discourses portray idealised images of a 'good mother' as one who puts the parental role first at all times. Although failing to prioritise either of the

two roles seems to entail some feelings of guilt for some of the female participants, this challenge does not render them caught up in the terrible tensions, frustrations and anxieties which are evident in the narratives of James and Sam – or at least they do not report their emotional responses in such strong terms (which would support a classic stoic image of the matriarch in the face of adversity). It would seem likely though, that men, who are newer at experiencing such tensions, are less able to cope with the strong emotions that the conflict of professional and parental selves raises, because they have had less practice in coping with such emotionally charged ontological dilemmas.

James and Sam both express two main desires in their narratives, firstly a desire to be more involved fathers, and secondly a desire to balance their family lives with their professional lives. I conclude that their autonomy to achieve self-determination is curtailed by a web of circumstances which prevents these men from achieving their goals. Home-based telework is seen as compounding existing feelings of conflict for these men, which runs contrary to the promises of policy makers, that flexible work will lead to balance and harmony; indeed discourses of balance are seen to tease and torment James and Sam – dangling an image of fatherhood which hybridises the ideals of traditional and ‘new’ ways of performing this role but which, for them, remains infuriatingly out of reach.

Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter I identify three paths that parents in telework might take when constructing their identity: they might prioritise the parental role; prioritise the professional role; or prioritise neither of these. I outline five discourses that parents in telework might draw upon in their constructions of self: traditional mother; traditional father; ‘new’ father; ‘new’ career woman; and work life balance. I also suggest four identity-related ‘actions’ that parents in telework might engage in: persisting to prioritise the role most traditional for one’s gender; resisting the urge to do so; balancing, which involves drawing on notions of ‘work life balance’; and swinging, which involves flitting between available and appropriate discourses. These findings are brought together and illustrated

visually in figures 5.1 and 5.2, and have provided a useful framework for the discussion presented in this chapter.

From my analysis of the data collected, and the discussions which have taken place in this chapter, I am able to conclude that home-based telework might be seen as having three impacts key on the identities of teleworking parents, with regard to the facilitation or hindrance of desired role prioritisation:

1. Telework can **enable existing desires for role prioritisation**
2. Telework can act as a **catalyst in forcing role prioritisation to be (re)considered**
3. Telework can **magnify existing tensions between roles**

And furthermore I propose that telework itself, to a greater or lesser extent, can provide both *pushes* away from, and *pulls* toward, traditional as well as non-traditional gender roles.

It is important to stress, once more, that whether telework acts as an **enabler**, a **catalyst**, or a **magnifier** is likely to depend largely upon the social and material circumstances of the individual teleworker, with factors such as the presence or absence of a supportive spouse; acceptance in one's community; the understanding of one's family and friends; the support of those within the employing organisation; and access to, and/or willingness to employ, (paid or unpaid) help with childcare and domestic work, all seen to affect how telework is experienced and identities constructed within it. This latter point strikes me as particularly interesting and worthy of note, as those paid and unpaid others (largely reported as being female others), who pick up the childcare and domestic work when men and women engage in professional employment, whether within a traditional organisational setting, or in the home, as in the case of telework, are often neglected in such discussions. I might conclude then, that one person's emancipation from the confines of traditional gender roles often relies heavily on others being rather rigidly confined within them. Nevertheless, my research suggests that home-based telework is currently providing a site of

opportunity to challenge and subvert the traditional gender stereotypes of men and women in both the professional and parental domain - although this opportunity is not seen as desirable or achievable by all.

In the following, and final, chapter I explicitly answer each of the three research questions (see the beginning of chapter six for a reminder of these). I will also discuss the key contributions of this project and its limitations, reflecting on the pros and cons of the methodology selected, and the usefulness of the models and terminology I have produced here to explain and account for how parents in telework construct their identities.

Chapter 6 – Conclusions

Introduction

The ultimate aim of this final chapter is to draw together and reflect upon what has gone before, under the headings of those research questions I set at the outset of the project, and to explicitly provide a response to these questions in the light of the new empirical data collected and my analysis of this. Additionally I consider what the key contributions of this thesis are, as well as its key limitations, focusing on this from a methodological perspective, as well as more generally. I conclude by considering what recommendations might be made, following this project, to future researchers and to policy makers, as well as to management practitioners, teleworkers and potential teleworkers themselves, and their families.

Addressing the Research Questions

My review of the literatures concerning telework, identity, gender, parenting and career, identifies a number of gaps in existing research, as well as highlighting areas which are of personal interest to me; and I propose that further exploration of such themes might be of interest, and of use, to others: both those who research, and those who comprise, organisational life. In response to my literature review I articulated three specific questions to be explored through my own research. These are as follows:

- 1. How does home-based telework interact with the reproduction of gendered parental and professional identities?**
- 2. What identity work is required by parents in home-based telework?**
- 3. What are the identity-related costs / rewards for parents in home-based telework?**

I now summarise my reply to each of these questions, in the hope that I will contribute something new to these literatures and specifically to debates about telework and gendered identities, and throughout this final chapter the implications of my overall findings will be considered.

Research Question 1

My review of the various relevant literatures, adds weight to the view I proposed at the outset of this document of both parental and professional identities (in other words people's understandings and talk about themselves in these roles), and the discourses which inform and reproduce these, as gendered; with different expectations placed upon men and women, for how they should behave and construct themselves, in the domains of home and family life, and in work and professional life. It serves to verify the view that mothers, for example, still today seem to be expected to prioritise their parental roles and arrange their working lives around these; fathers, on the other hand, are often presented as being expected to prioritise their careers, and act as the breadwinners for their families, rather than taking 'hands on' and involved parental roles themselves. Home-based telework is described as having the potential to shake up these dichotomous ways of being and perhaps even to create a more gender equal world (Taskin and Devos, 2005) – a grand claim, and one which seems to create much friction and dispute amongst theorists. Phizacklea and Wolkowitz (1995), and more recently Wilson and Greenhill (2004) for example, argue that home-based work further entrenches oppositional gender roles for men and women. My own empirical investigation therefore seeks to explore:

- How does home-based telework interact with the reproduction of gendered parental and professional identities?

In other words, does this mode of work further embed gendered identities in the domains of work and family life, or does it allow both men and women the chance to forge new ways of embodying, experiencing, and describing these roles?

It is my finding that, in the case of the sample group of home-based teleworkers I interviewed, parents both resist, and persist in, the traditional ways of talking about parenthood and of talking about professional selves that might be expected for their gender. In particular, one out of the seven women I interviewed seems to resist gendered expectations and constructs herself as focused more upon her professional, than her parental self; and two of the men seem to resist prioritising their professional roles, in order to construct themselves much more as involved and caring parents. Three of the women present themselves as mothers first and foremost, with their careers secondary to this primary role; yet remarkably none of the teleworking fathers I interviewed present themselves unequivocally as breadwinners, prioritising their careers over family life, as might be expected. This suggests that it might be rare for parents who primarily identify with their career to engage in home-based telework (which I define as working from home for half of their working hours or more), or alternatively might be seen to indicate that home-based telework renders a professional identity less accessible or desirable. Even more surprisingly, the only person who does seem to identify more with their professional role than with parenthood, in my sample of 14 people, is a woman. This might suggest a broader social change, both in terms of the roles that women inhabit and prioritise in contemporary society, and in rearticulating dominant understandings of the idea of 'breadwinning' – which some participants describe as a gender-neutral activity nowadays (where traditionally it has been tied to male parenting), and as a concept that does not necessarily exclude other more involved, or at least more 'balanced', ways of being parents.

Overall I identify three 'resisters' and three 'persisters' amongst the fourteen participants. Despite an even gender balance in the sample (which comprises seven men and seven women), two of the resisters are male and one is female; and all three of the persisters are female. If I were inclined to take a quantitative 'scorecard' approach to interpreting this finding, and if indeed I were to make the huge assumption that resisting gender norms is a sign of emancipation, then I could suggest that more of the teleworking mothers in my sample are confined to gender-appropriate behaviour, whereas more of the teleworking fathers in my sample seem to be released from societies expectations for them, and therefore I might conclude that the impact of home-based telework is negative in terms of

emancipating women from their traditional roles BUT is positive in terms of enabling men to see other possibilities. However this claim of course belies the complexity behind such issues. First of all it can certainly be challenged for making overly confident inferences from a relatively small sample. Secondly it represents a very particular value-laden interpretation of this finding ie. that women who are mothers should be seeking to achieve 'more' in life, beyond their parental roles, and that men should be more involved in family life. As men currently seem to most often occupy what are considered to be the more prestigious positions in our society (ie. the more well paid professional roles), some might argue that it is no cause for celebration when they are afforded further opportunities to engage in other domains. Whereas others might welcome men's increased participation in parenting and domestic life, which might in the long term lead to women being less confined to their traditional roles. But furthermore it might be asked: is it necessarily problematic for women to prioritise parenthood – as motherhood is also seen as a virtuous vocation and is often expressed as very rewarding? What does become clear is that the interpretation of my findings is contentious and wholly dependent upon one's worldview in relation to such issues and so I am unable to provide any definitive answer to those who ask 'should we embrace telework?'. Thirdly the claim made above ignores what the outcomes of telework are for these individuals, and for others taking different paths, in terms of the work their choices require, and the costs and benefits they find that this form of work brings (which I shall specifically discuss in the sections below) and so any celebration or condemnation of this mode of work would be premature; but fourthly, and crucially, such a conclusion also ignores the question of whether telework itself facilitates or hinders gender atypical, as well as typical, role preferences, or if it is merely a coincidental context for such expressions.

The data collected suggests that, in the case of some of the participants, home-based telework has enabled them to prioritise their desired role, whether this is a traditional or non-traditional gender role; for example it seems to have facilitated some of the women to focus more on their parental selves (persisting), as well as enabling one to become more involved in professional life (resisting). It is also described by some of my participants as being a catalyst in encouraging or forcing both men and women to reconsider their priorities (whether this is more

toward work or toward family life – though the latter is by far the more commonly expressed preference for both the male and the female teleworkers in this particular sample). However it should be noted that, in several cases, the exact interaction that home-based telework has with role prioritisation is not always clear, and for these people it may indeed just be the context where gendered identities are reproduced or challenged, as might have been the case for these individuals anyway, regardless of the mode of work they engage in.

I found, from analysis of the data collected, that home-based telework is claimed to have provided both pushes from certain roles (Ruby, for example, expresses finding a professional identity slipping out of reach when work is performed outside of the traditional setting) and pulls towards certain roles (Sam, for example, describes that he found himself drawn towards being a more involved father once he had begun teleworking). No clear pattern was found to account for this, or for the other identity-related effects¹⁶ of teleworking I report, in terms of the factors I recorded concerning demographics and how telework was chosen and is employed by these fourteen individuals (eg. time spent teleworking, stage in their life course, or the ages of their children). But what did emerge was the importance of the, less easily recorded, social and material circumstances of the participants, for example whether they have a supportive spouse or the money available to pay for childcare, which do seem to play an important role in either facilitating or hindering the achievement of desired roles, whether gender-traditional or not. Therefore I conclude that such factors, and especially the people around the teleworker (eg. their families, employers, work colleagues, communities, paid domestic and childcare professionals), are crucial in terms of determining how telework is experienced and how life changing it can be for the individual – for better or for worse. I also acknowledge that my own research has only scratched the surface in uncovering such possible determinants of how telework might be experienced and identities created in it; and this leads me to call for further research which takes a more holistic approach: considering the families and broader social and organisational networks of teleworkers, as well as economic, material and other factors which might be pertinent in exploring why gendered identities are either reproduced or challenged in this mode of

¹⁶ In other words the effects that I interpret as having impacted upon how the participants understand themselves in different domains

work; and I realise that this brings with it both philosophical and methodological challenges.

So far in this chapter I have made no mention of those participants who do not seem to make a clear priority of either their traditional or non-traditional gender role; and, as these people make up the majority of the sample group (eight out of the fourteen participants seem to prioritise neither role), they certainly warrant some attention. In relation to research question one, asking how telework interacts with the reproduction of gendered identities, the fact that most participants fail to take a determined path to either wholly resist or wholly persist in the role traditional for their gender is significant, but again it is unclear whether telework itself creates, or is merely the canvas for, the lack of prioritisation of either the parental or professional role. I do however propose that, for some of the participants, telework magnifies existing conflicts between these roles, and this often results in articulations about the experience of painful emotions. The costs, as well as the rewards that telework might bring, in terms of satisfactory identities, are discussed further later in this chapter, but first I consider the identity work that is required by parents performing professional work in their homes.

Research Question 2

Following my review of relevant literature, as presented in chapter one, I suggest that home-based telework might, by its nature, bring to the fore an ontological dilemma which faces all parents who engage in paid work: whether to 1) prioritise parenthood; 2) prioritise career; or 3) prioritise neither of these roles, in their constructions of self. Following my collection and analysis of new data, I have formulated an alternative articulation of this dilemma as: whether to 1) persist in prioritising the traditional gender role; 2) resist this; or 3) to swing between gender typical and atypical discourses, as well as, on occasion, those of work life balance; these are the categories which seem to best reflect the stories that my participants tell of their experiences of home-based telework, and I believe that these also provide a useful framework through which to organise my discussion of the data in the chapter five.

In the previous section above I describe the outcomes of home-based telework upon the reproduction of gendered professional and parental identities, summarising that traditional gender roles might be both perpetuated and challenged by teleworking parents – most commonly by the same individual at different times in the course of their narrative of self – and the extent to which participants resist or persist in traditional gender behaviour seems to be mediated by a complex web of both social and material factors, which poses a challenge to conventional forms of research. Overall I find that more female participants than male persist in their traditional gender role, while more men than women seem able to resist these. This furthermore suggests that professional identities are not considered achievable or desirable for this group of home-based teleworkers, with the exception of one female – which in itself is remarkable. I also stress that in order to contextualise, and appreciate the significance of, these findings further attention must be given to the work that each of these options requires from the individual concerned. I therefore now consider the second research question, which is:

- What identity work is required by parents in home-based telework?

The idea of identity work expounds a social constructionist perspective of identity, where identity is seen as something that people must work at in the light of various discourses, which might or might not be accessible or appropriate to their social situation. For example, I have suggested throughout this thesis that different discourses concerning parenthood and professional life are available to men and to women. As I see identity as presented largely through language (though not exclusively) I primarily focus here on the discursive work required by parents constructing themselves in telework. The management of emotion and the practical arrangement of space by teleworkers might also be pertinent in addressing this question – but these are not the focus of the present study and so do not receive attention here. Issues of spatial organisation in telework have been explored elsewhere (by Felstead et al, 2005, for instance) – although a more specific analysis of the material construction of teleworking spaces and selves (considering for example the artefacts, dress, and gestures of teleworkers in relation to identity) is overdue, but might be redressed through examination of

the visual data collected as part of this project, should a suitable framework for analysis of this be found, or through research utilising similar methods, at some time in the future; likewise emotion is an area often overlooked by researchers of telework, and by organisational researchers more broadly – and I do feel that exploration of such an important element of identity also requires a full analysis by researchers in the future (see Musson and Marsh, 2008, where myself and a colleague begin to consider the interrelations of identity and emotion in telework, using some of the data from this study as a starting point).

The discursive work alone that teleworkers engage in, in order to construct themselves as parents and/or as professionals, seems to take a variety of forms. Firstly there is the work of either utilising, suppressing or subverting the available discourses, as individuals navigate the various pushes toward, and pulls away from, these, often competing, discourses which seem to operate as disciplinary mechanisms (Foucault, 1978 in Fournier, 1999) dictating, to some degree, the appropriate forms of subjectivity for men and women in these domains. If one chooses to persist in their traditional gender role for example, it seems these individuals must allow themselves to be pulled by those gender appropriate discourses, which they reproduce in their presentations of self, but also must work at playing down alternative ways of being in their narratives. A good example of this understating or downplaying of the alternative or 'other' role in order to maintain convincing embodiment of the preferred role is Sandra's description of herself as *'just a normal housewife who's got a full time job'*. This evident contradiction suggests that people are not necessarily uncomfortable with such inconsistencies, rather they seem to cope with pulls towards gender appropriate behaviour by 'living with' the paradoxical presentations of self that this necessitates (see El Sawad et al, 2004, who present similar findings from their study of career narratives). I furthermore propose that telework might not be simply a benign context in this scenario, as, in my data, this mode of work is seen to provide a distance from discourses of professional life, which requires, or at least suggests, the prioritisation of other identity routes, especially the parental. The three women who prioritise their parental role most vehemently over their careers in their interviews with me might also have been able to avoid the pulls toward capitalist discourses of careerism as their roles seem to be the

furthest from stereotypes of professional work, either due to the job role itself, or the part time nature of the work undertaken.

If, on the other hand, teleworkers choose to resist their traditional gender role, then work seems to be required to prevent oneself from being pulled by those discourses which are more commonly expected for their gender. Adam, for example is seen to actively attack the idea of careerism in order to position himself oppositionally, as an involved father. 'Resisters' must also perform some discursive work in order to be seen as convincing in their prioritised role, seemingly working harder at this than those for whom that role might be considered more 'natural' because of their gender. Dan and Adam, the two men who prioritise their parental identities in their interviews with me, both adopt a more traditionally feminine discourse of 'care' to describe their parenting, whereas the women themselves rarely talk in such explicit ways about their love and affection for their children. Kath, the female participant who seems to prioritise her professional self with me, similarly employs a discursive technique to signal to me her identification with this role: using organisational jargon, presumably to demonstrate her professional credence, but what is most surprising is that she seems to have felt the need to use such talk not only when referring to her career, but also when referring to her role as a mother. In a further twist she also uses a discourse of care and meaningfulness, more often associated with motherhood, to describe her career.

Kath also highlights the work required by some teleworking parents in terms of organising others to perform domestic and childcare work – Kath's description of such arrangements is the most extensive of all of those in my sample, which I suggest is likely to be due to the fact that she is the only participant who prioritises her career, and also because she is a woman and such arrangements might traditionally be seen to be her responsibility. Kath's example furthermore highlights the work required by others, eg. family members and paid others (who are likely to be largely women, as they dominate the care and domestic work sectors of industry), in order to support teleworkers in general, and, as is the case in Kath's example, to specifically facilitate teleworkers who wish to focus on their careers. Hylmo (2004) suggests that male teleworkers are more likely to have access to supportive others, enabling them to engage in paid work in their

homes, than women: in the case of James, for example his wife Helen felt that she had to take their child out of the home to allow her husband to work; but Kath seems to be expert in soliciting the various support mechanisms available to her; just as she seems skilled in 'cherry-picking' the discourses she requires to construct herself. Crucially she seems to have the economic means available to employ professional services to provide childcare and domestic assistance, and she also describes having a supportive husband who is able and willing to be involved in school runs, shopping and cooking. These two factors seem to have been fundamental in enabling Kath to resist prioritising her parental role, as might be more expected of a mother of school aged children. The irony, in Kath's case, is that her husband Gary's availability is itself due to his teleworking. This suggests that telework can make men more available to support, or to take over entirely, the traditional female role of parenthood - although it does not necessarily mean that they will be willing or able to do so. Indeed Campbell Clark's (2000) work suggests that men's ability to be more involved parents might be curtailed by 'gatekeepers': others (spouses for example) who might stand in the way of their desired role prioritisation, and there is clearly some work required of teleworkers - seemingly especially those men who wish to be more involved parents - in dealing with this sensitive issue. In the case of Dan, a single father, the prioritisation he makes of his parental role seems to have required less work in this regard, as he has no 'significant other' competing for dominance in this role. Yet for James and Sam, married men who express desires to be more involved fathers - which are not entirely fulfilled - great struggles are evident (although it is not clear if this is purely due to the 'gatekeeper' thesis). This again suggests to me that the role of others, both in hindering or enabling teleworkers to prioritise their desired role, is worthy of further investigation.

It could be argued that those eight people in my sample who do not seem to prioritise either the parental or professional role in their interviews with me are not actually trying to prioritise either of these roles, and instead are seeking to achieve the elusive 'work life balance' (though explicit mention of this notion is less frequent than might have been expected), or it could be suggested that these people are simply not working hard enough at selecting a consistent role through which to present themselves. The data suggests that certainly some of these people do desire to prioritise one role: namely those men mentioned above

who articulate a desire to prioritise their parental roles; however, once again, social factors seem to have prevented these men from being successful in achieving these desires. Furthermore I propose that it is this group (those prioritising neither role) who seem to have received the least favourable outcomes from telework – they report experiencing painful emotions as the two roles conflict; outcomes which are not echoed by those participants more consistently prioritising one role above the other - whether the traditional role for their gender or not. Below I discuss further the costs, as well as the rewards, of telework as I address the final research question but first a final point is worth noting in relation to the work of teleworkers: whilst participants of both genders report that maintaining a strong professional identity is difficult in telework (with the exception of Kath) and that they might work harder or for longer hours to somehow compensate for this, the men report that their efforts in this regard are recognised and sometimes rewarded; the women's extra labour however seems to go unnoticed.

Research Question 3

The telework literature is replete with discussion of the pros and cons of this mode of work, yet, to my knowledge, no publication so far has specifically addressed the what the costs and rewards of telework might be in relation to identity, in terms of how men and women engaging in home-based telework understand themselves as parents and as professionals, which, to me, seems especially relevant when considering a domain where, rather uniquely, both might be appropriate. I therefore ask:

- What are the identity-related costs / rewards for parents in home-based telework?

I have already stressed that the broader social outcomes of home-based telework, especially as related to gender equality, cannot be straightforwardly judged as either costs or as rewards – because this depends entirely upon the view of gender relations that one brings to appraise these findings, and I am similarly cautious in proposing what the personal costs and rewards are for

teleworkers constructing themselves as parents and as professionals in this ambiguous domain. My coping strategy, as evident in chapter five, is to suggest that the personal costs and rewards for parents in telework might be gleaned through the reported emotions expressed by the participants, which again suggests that emotion and identity are related, and that these interconnections deserve further attention (which for reasons of space cannot be given here). For the purposes of analysing the data I have generated, I attempted to categorise the emotions expressed by the participants as negative (costs) and positive (rewards), thereby deeming articulations of emotions such as guilt and frustration as a personal cost, and joy and contentment as a personal reward, for the individual in question. In keeping with the analytic categories employed thus far, my analysis explored whether there is a pattern of negative and positive emotions as related to the groupings of participants I have labelled: as persisting in prioritising their traditional gender role, resisting this, swinging between, or balancing the two. I find that there does indeed seem to be some relation between whether a role is prioritised and the expression of negative and positive emotions for this group of teleworkers, and ergo there appears to be a correlation between role prioritisation and whether telework brings costs or rewards for the individual concerned (at least for the sample group of teleworkers I interviewed) – but another factor is also pertinent here in terms of the nature of emotions expressed and how the participants deal with these – the teleworker’s gender – as I shall explain below.

I begin though by discussing those participants who do seem to make a clear priority of one role - whether their traditional gender role or not (the persisters and the resisters). These six people report relatively few costs, rather, they might be seen to have been rewarded with the achievement of prioritising, what they articulate as, their desired roles. It was a somewhat unexpected finding that even those defying gender norms ie. the men who prioritise their parental roles and the woman who prioritises her professional self, express satisfaction and contentment and so might be deemed to have reaped the rewards of telework in this respect. There might however be costs to these individuals in the future, but I can, of course, only speculate as to what the long-term outcomes of telework might be for these people. The men who prioritise their parental roles already report that they are judged by others - they claim that they are seen as less

committed to work and/or are seen as somehow deviant when they are present in their homes, or the local community, during traditional office hours - although, at the present time, they characteristically downplay any costs to themselves as a result the judgements of others, focusing instead upon the rewards of telework: of being able to spend more time, and build relationships, with their children. Kath, the only female resister, does not dwell upon how she is personally viewed by others but, perhaps worryingly for her, in contemporary society mothers who do not prioritise their parental roles still seem to be stigmatised to some degree. I have already touched on how my own initial response to Kath's failure to articulate such priorities (which came as a surprise to me), is a reflection of this, still dominant, discourse. On the other hand men prioritising their parental role, whilst this is not traditionally the expectation for their gender, are now sometimes valorised in today's society, as they can be viewed through the increasingly legitimate 'new man' discourse, to which there is notably no widely accepted female alternative.

It is for those participants who do not seem to make a clear priority of either the parental or professional role that I propose emotional costs are currently and more clearly evident. Furthermore the nature of these costs appears to be gendered, with some of the male participants expressing these emotions as frustration and some of the women expressing these as guilt. Telework's role in this is claimed, by these people, to be as a magnifier of existing conflicts between the roles of parent and professional, seemingly making more intense those struggles with the pushes and pulls toward and away from those gender appropriate and non-appropriate discourses of parenthood and career and, in extreme cases, the outcomes for these people are resonant of the schizophrenia of identity suggested by Campbell-Clarke (2000) as being characteristic of contemporary society (see Sam and James as prime examples). I propose that it seems to be the women in my sample who are better at coping with the negative emotions presented by those parents in telework not prioritising either their parental or professional role; perhaps this is because their struggles with such ontological dilemmas are well rehearsed. Men might be seen as less experienced in this respect and some of my male participants seem to be painfully disillusioned by false promises that flexible work might allow them to 'have it all'.

Reflections

Having provided a response to each of the research questions, thus in effect concluding this project, I now consider its overall success. I reflect upon the topic selected, how I collected the data, analysed, and reported this, and finally upon the outputs of this project ie. my overall thesis and associated claims. In keeping with the philosophical stance I have taken throughout this project, I base this discussion on the caveat that no piece of research about human life can ever provide an entirely complete and conclusively truthful analysis, and therefore some of the more traditional measures of the success of a research project eg. generalisability, reliability, and validity (as proposed by Saunders et al, 2000, as factors which all organisational researchers must consider) are not particularly relevant in this case but will be dealt with briefly here: I have stressed from the beginning that my aim is not to provide results which might be generalised and I do not pertain to a view which suggests that data produced from social research can ever be 'reliable' in the sense that the method will 'yield the same results on different occasions' (Saunders et al, 2000), indeed I stress the situated nature of the data collected for this project, which is specific to the circumstances of its collection ie. the specific moment in time; the place; and the parties involved - not downplaying the impact of the participants' reactions to me as a researcher and my own role in shaping the data collected; I also question the validity, for example, of the relationship between telework and the role prioritised by the participants, highlighting that whether or not this is a causal relationship is not always clear and will never be certain; which reflects the often non-linear and messy nature of people's narratives of self. Such measures of the 'credibility' of research seem to be a hangover from more quasi-scientific forms of research. Boyce (in Gaskell and Bauer 2000) claims that these usual measures are little more than 'fallacies', specific to a positivist mentality, and more appropriate to quantitative research. Taylor (2001) proposes that 'there are no well established procedures for evaluating the knowledge obtained' from qualitative research of a more interpretive nature. So how might qualitative research and discourse analysis in particular be evaluated? Some say that the judgement of qualitative research is purely a matter of aesthetics, yet as Gaskell and Bauer (2000) point

out there is only a limited number of aesthetes available – and when these ‘masters’ disagree it is never entirely clear on what basis.

Gaskell and Bauer (ibid) propose that there are two extreme responses to what Denzin and Lincoln (1998) call this the ‘crisis’ of legitimation of qualitative research. Firstly to attempt to directly map those criteria listed above (generalisability, reliability, and validity) onto qualitative research, yet there are clearly ontological clashes which prevent these from being particularly useful for much qualitative research, especially that which is underpinned by an anti-realist philosophy, as I have outlined, in relation to the current project, above; second is to totally reject such criteria and indeed any ‘quality’ criteria, as this is seen as a form of social control by the ‘male gaze’ of the academe. Seeing both of these responses as rather extreme and not exactly appropriate or useful, Gaskell and Bauer consequently add their voices to calls for a middle ground (see van Dijk, 1997, for example) which suggests the development of evaluation criteria which is more suited to qualitative research.

In a response to their own call Gaskell and Bauer (2000) propose that all social researchers should strive for ‘public accountability’ because research of this nature takes place in the public domain. In order to achieve this they suggest that qualitative research should meet the aims of confidence (a reader may be confident in such findings as being more than simply the work of the researcher’s imagination) and relevance (the research is linked to existing theory but also adds something insightful and novel). Researchers should do this, Gaskell and Bauer propose, through the practices of triangulation and reflexivity; transparency and procedural clarity; corpus construction; thick description; local surprise; and communicative validation. Taylor’s (2001) response is to suggest that qualitative researchers can only remain reflexive and consider ‘good practice’. This entails ensuring that they are systematic and rigorous in their analyses – which might involve using some quantitative techniques (though the value this adds is contestable). In particular Taylor (ibid) proposes that qualitative researchers should flag up, not down play, ‘deviant cases’; they should attend to inconsistency and diversity in their data, providing ‘richness’ of detail and quality of interpretation. Ultimately Potter and Wetherell (1987) conclude that qualitative research might be evaluated on the ‘fruitfulness’ of the findings.

So what have I done in terms of the criteria proposed above to ensure quality and rigour in my method? I begin by stressing that this is my first attempt at discourse analysis, a method which Dick (2004, p212) proposes 'requires considerable experience before a researcher feels 'comfortable' with it'. I have tried extremely hard to ensure that my conduct has been ethical throughout this project (or as Gaskell and Bauer, 2000, might phrase it, I have tried to achieve 'public accountability') because I believe that it is a great privilege to be invited into people's homes and have them speak frankly about their experiences, fears and desires, and I take my responsibility to these people very seriously, as well as to The White Rose Consortium, the body funding this research, and to my supervisors who have supported me throughout this project. In terms of the triangulation and reflexivity, promoted by Gaskell and Bauer (ibid), I have been cautious in the claims that I have made of my data. I am particularly aware that I might be seen as arrogant in 'judging' my participants in terms of whether they put their families before their careers and vice versa, and so I have tried to couch my interpretations in less conclusive or finite terms, for example by using the disclaimers 'seems to prioritise' or 'prioritises with me'. I have also provided the raw data (in the form of the interview transcripts – see appendix 4) and I invite readers to examine how I made these inferences and perhaps also challenge my subjective reading of this data. In providing a range of verbatim quotes (in chapter four), as well as full transcripts, I hope that I have also presented thick description of each participant's story. I have also aimed for transparency and procedural clarity, by outlining in detail exactly how I collected and analysed the data (see chapter three), even including an example of the analysis technique for the reader. Lack of experience and confidence means that I did not seek communicative validation from the participants themselves as to my reading of their interviews, I also felt that this would be an unwarranted imposition on their time; but I did discuss my interpretations with my supervisors and took on board their alternative understandings, using these to broaden my discussions and 'reign in' the claims I have made of my findings. I have never professed, however, that my reading of this data is anymore than simply my interpretation and do not deny that it could also have been interpreted in other ways by other people. The corpus construction is one criterion suggested by Gaskell and Bauer

(2000) that troubles me a little, as my sample was not especially representative, and I discuss this issue the following section.

Taylor (2001) proposes that researchers must be systematic in their analyses and I have explained the systematic method which I used consistently with each of the participant's transcripts and related information. With hindsight I wish I had been more rigorous in recording certain details for all participants at the point of data collection, for example their domestic and childcare arrangements, as my findings suggest that this is a more pertinent factor than I had initially imagined. Taylor (ibid) also proposes that researchers should highlight 'deviant cases' and I certainly do not seek to explain away those who do not take the conventional path for their gender for example; indeed these people's experiences have shaped my overall thesis (which suggests 'resisting' as well as 'persisting' behaviours occur in telework). Indeed, in the tradition of Potter and Wetherell (1995), by examining those who resist convention and expectation, I hope that I have expanded the 'margin of play' that traditional analytical methods, focusing on consensus or collective experiences, tend to mask. In terms of Taylor's (2001) criterion of 'quality of interpretation'; Gaskell and Bauer's (2000) 'local surprise'; and Potter and Wetherell's (1987) 'fruitfulness' of the findings, I believe that these overlapping evaluations can only be judged in the light of the new knowledge I have contributed, and this is specifically considered in the following section.

To be precise what I will reflect on in these concluding sections are the strengths of this piece, summarising the key contributions it makes to the relevant literatures, and its limitations, reflecting on how these might have been overcome, and/or what might be learnt from these in future research projects. In the final section I will also propose, as is customary, some recommendations to various groups: those researching telework (and other areas related to this topic); those engaging in telework, or thinking of adopting it; those with a responsibility for promoting or governing telework (ie. the government and management of organisations); and finally the families of teleworkers and potential teleworkers; ending this chapter, and indeed this thesis, with a few final reflections.

Key contributions and limitations

I opened this volume by explaining why it is important to continue to keep discussion of gender, and in particular of gendered parental and professional identities at the forefront of organisational research agendas. I also stressed that telework seems to provide a fertile and interesting context for such debates. Having reviewed a broad range of relevant literature I sought to fill an important knowledge gap, which has been overlooked by previous research, by asking questions which address how telework interacts with the reproduction of gendered identities; what identity-related work is involved for parents in telework; and what the costs and rewards might be. I still feel that these are important questions and that my raising of these has been a useful contribution in itself. I chose to focus on parental identities as statistics still suggest that it is not just women who are disadvantaged in the labour market but mothers in particular; and the lack of literature on men's experiences of parenting and work attests to the need to provide empirical research on fatherhood and its connection to men's identities at home and in their professional lives - particularly at a time when flexible working options are increasingly being made available to fathers. This focus does of course mean that childless teleworkers were not considered for inclusion in my sample, which has resulted in an absence of data from this project concerning how telework is experienced by those not in traditional family configurations; and homosexuality, for example, is not considered. Dan, whose status as single father is far less common than single motherhood, reports the only non-conventional family set up. Indeed it might be said that 'the traditional family' (if ever there was such a thing) is less relevant and common in today's society – yet 13 out of the 14 participants in my sample report that they fall into this category ie. that they are married heterosexual couples living at home with their children. There are no reports of step parenting, which is an increasingly common phenomenon in today's family, and indeed this, and other non-conventional family configurations, might provide useful insights to these debates. My sample is also made up entirely of white British families, which was not deliberate, but I suggest that a sample with a more diverse ethnic mix might also yield further insightful data, and would be representative of a more inclusive research approach, which I admit I have not achieved here.

Whilst my sample might be considered to be, to some degree, homogenous in regard to racial make up and family status, I propose that there is a lot of diversity to be found within the group, for example in terms of the length of time that participants have teleworked, how long they work from home each week, the ages of their children, and how they arrange childcare and domestic work (even though this last consideration is based on incomplete data). My attempts at measuring this kind of data suggest that the more frequently used categories which organisational researchers use to differentiate between 'types' of teleworker are not sufficient to capture the rich range of circumstances of those employing this mode of work. I also acknowledge however that my sample is not large enough to allow for any clear patterns to emerge across these categories, but believe that this is an important aim for future research (although that is not to say that, for example, I expect two women who both work from home full time and have a two year old child to experience telework, and construct their identities within it, in the same way).

Another distinction which might be useful in future research on telework is that identified by Kossek et al (2006) of 'integrators' and 'separators' of home and work life which seems most pertinent in home-based telework, however the distinction between these groups was not so easily identified or clear cut in my sample, possibly because this was not a key aim of my data collection or subsequent analysis. Use of video seems to potentially be a useful way of capturing signs of teleworkers' strategies (whether of integration or separation) as well as of their broader constructions of self, and whilst I had difficulties with this method – particularly in terms of analysing this side of the data – I am hopeful that video and other novel research methods are providing new insight on a range of topics as they are increasingly being employed in organisation studies.

Despite only attending to the spoken data collected in this current volume, I hope that my development of 'a priori discourse analysis' provides a contribution to the methods literature, in acknowledging that dominant discourses are pre-existing and that many can be anticipated in advance of data collection. The main focus of the discourse analysis, in my version, therefore becomes the questions: what discourses are present for whom? How have they been employed and why might

this be? One drawback to this method though is over-reductionism. By focusing on what I see as the key discourses I acknowledge that I may have lost sight of other important issues. For example I have steered the participants, through my own research agenda, to discuss their identities in just the two roles of parenthood and career – I have therefore manoeuvred them away from discussion of other roles which might otherwise also have been central to their constructions of self: for example in terms of their other family roles; voluntary work; political or civic roles; sports; hobbies or interests.

Moving away from the process of this project, toward considering the outcomes, I feel that my main achievement has been to create an illustrative framework outlining five discourses that parents in telework might draw upon in their constructions of self, which also represents four identity-related 'actions' with which they might engage, and I have suggested three key effects of home-based telework upon the identity of professional workers who are also parents. I have deliberately made figure 5.2 a clear and simple model which can be easily understood, but I hope that I have also illuminated the diverse ways in which people position themselves in relation to the discourses identified, and how they experience each role, and thereby I have not just created a 'straw man' view of parents in telework. I hope that by accompanying the model with some rich description of the participants' experiences I have showed the variety held within each of these categories and have counselled against making simple generalisations about how mothers and fathers will construct themselves in telework. I hope that this model and new configuration of terminology will enhance debates on telework – and perhaps on flexible work more generally; this framework might also be used to explore parents constructing their identities in traditional work - I would be particularly keen to explore, in the future, how it might be developed to encapsulate parents working in these broader arenas.

First though I suggest that further research testing my findings on a larger sample of home-based teleworkers might be fruitful – in order to test the usefulness of the categorisations I have created and the claims I make here. For example, whilst I have stressed that it is theoretically plausible that teleworking fathers might prioritise their careers and draw upon discourses of traditional fatherhood, further empirical research would test whether this is born out in

practice – and will also help to explore how men experience this ‘path’. Eventually a longitudinal project to explore the changing nature of how men and women construct their parental and professional identities in different work (and perhaps even non-work) contexts – considering which discourses endure, which change in meaning, and which fall out of vogue or out of usage altogether, would make an important contribution to the gender and parenting literature – exploring, for example, whether men will continue to struggle with ideas of ‘balance’, become more involved parents, or revert to traditional forms of fatherhood; and what the implications of this will be for women.

I conclude this section by returning to the point made in the previous one, that the pivotal indicator of the success of a research project is the contribution made by its findings. Below I summarise what I see as my three most important findings:

1) Parents who engage in home-based telework might be seen to adopt one of three ‘paths’: toward involved parenthood; toward career prioritisation; or prioritising neither role (in which case discourses of work-life balance might be utilised, or alternatively, and more commonly, the teleworker might ‘swing’ between the different discourses which are available to them).

2) The consistent prioritisation of a singular role is not always possible or desirable for mothers and fathers in telework but when neither the parental or professional role is prioritised the outcome might be described in terms of painful emotions, expressed by the women in my sample as guilt, and by the men as frustration.

3) Telework can a) enable existing desires for role prioritisation; b) it can act as a catalyst in forcing role prioritisation to be (re)considered; and c) it can magnify existing tensions between roles. It is important to stress that whether telework acts as an enabler, a catalyst, or a magnifier is likely to depend largely upon the social and material circumstances of the individual teleworker.

I feel that collectively these three statements make a solid contribution to debates on gendered identities in telework. I have suggested that ‘swinging’ between

discourses appropriate for one's gender is more commonly evident than prioritising either the gender traditional of non-traditional role, or the articulation of ideas of balance – and this challenges the idea that people will always seek to prioritise just one coherent presentation of self; I have stressed the social and material circumstances of individuals as being pertinent to how telework may impact upon identity - which role they prioritise, whether they might be able to resist their traditional gender role for example – which provides a contribution to broader gender equality debates; and I have highlighted the gendered nature of expressions of emotion. The critical examination of emotion is still a marginal concern in organisation studies, and so highlighting this issue, even in this small way, might raise its profile. Overall I have explored mothers' and fathers' role prioritisation in telework, an issue which, to my knowledge, has not previously been the focus of research, and I have provided a framework and terminology to further discussion of this topic in the context of the telework literature, and perhaps beyond.

Recommendations and Final Reflections

I shall now consider what recommendations might be made, to various parties, following this project. First though I stress that this is not a straightforward task for a researcher whose approach is not underpinned by the positivist notion that 'through the use of appropriate methods a researcher can identify causal relationships, making it possible to apply this knowledge to real-world problems through accurate predications and interventions' (Taylor, 2001, p325). In keeping with the interpretivist tradition my work is not about providing formulas or prescriptions but is about highlighting the various ways in which organisational phenomena might be experienced by those for whom they are a lived reality. For example, a key proposal I make above is that those men and women who do not make a priority of either their professional or parental role seem to suffer some personal costs; does this necessarily mean that I should recommend that anyone entering telework should make a priority of one of these roles? Does it mean I should warn anyone unable to make such a choice against adopting telework? I do not think that such recommendations necessarily follow these findings; rather I hope that my research serves to illuminate the struggles which

might be faced, as well as the rewards which might be available, to those employing telework. So what I can more confidently recommend in regard to this, is that potential teleworkers should have the opportunity to speak others who have experienced this mode of work, or ideally should be able to experience it for themselves through a pilot scheme, in order to make an informed choice, which will hopefully be the right decision for themselves, for their organisations, and for their families. This has implications for those promoting telework, who I counsel not to make simplistic generalisations about what the benefits might be, and whom telework might best suit, with a neglect of what the costs might be in terms of producing satisfactory identities – a factor which might not previously have featured in such considerations.

The experience of home-based telework seems to often depend upon the responses and support of others, therefore it would be prudent for potential teleworkers to consider 1) what they wish to gain from telework and 2) who the achievement of this might rely upon or impact, and ensure that these people's views are taken on board prior to final decision making. However it is likely to be difficult to anticipate how other people will react, and so this again points to the importance of providing a trial period of teleworking before the employee is expected to commit to it. My research suggests that home-based telework will not be the right move for all workers and so should never be compulsory, or be entered into without due consideration. Workers who are already engaged in home-based telework might wish to take stock of their current situation by asking similar questions of themselves in discussion with the others around them, in order to review whether telework is still the right mode of work for them; this might be something that a manager could prompt or discuss with the worker at regular intervals.

In terms of future research, I have already, throughout this chapter, proposed some of the areas which seem to me to warrant further attention, whether from myself or others. These particularly include the broader organisational and social networks of teleworkers, indeed their broader social and material circumstances as a whole, and how these impact upon identity construction and experiences of telework. I have suggested that it might be useful to include consideration of elements such as the stage in the life course of participants, because the age (of

both the participants and their children) might make a difference to their role prioritisations at any one time. More research is also needed on emotion in telework: the performance of emotion and the construction of identity are cultural aspects of human activity that I see as closely related, yet are currently overlooked by much mainstream organisational research. The topic of fatherhood as a focus for research is also still marginalized, and at a time when the government is making flexible work more available to men with children, it would seem that it needs to be placed more centrally on research agendas.

It is difficult to know how to end a project which has been such a large part of my life for the past five years, so I simply conclude by saying that I hope that the story I have told here is interesting, useful, and respectful of those who entrusted their experiences to me.

Total word count for volume 1 = 77,312

References and appendices, including interview transcripts, follow in volume 2