LOOKING AT PERCEPTIONS OF WORK/LIFE BALANCE WITH TECHNOLOGY IN

YOUNG ADULTS

A Thesis
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty
of the
North Dakota State University
of Agriculture and Applied Science

By

Sara-Maria Hannele Juntunen

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of
MASTER OF ARTS

Major Department:
Communication

April 2019

Fargo, North Dakota

North Dakota State University
Graduate School

Title

LOOKING AT PERCEPTIONS OF WORK/LIFE BALANCE WITH
TECHNOLOGY IN YOUNG ADULTS

By

Sara-Maria Hannele Juntunen

The Supervisory Committee certifies that this ***disquisition*** complies with North Dakota

State University's regulations and meets the accepted standards for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE:

Dr. Justin Walden

Chair

Dr. Carrie Anne Platt

Dr. Catherine Kingsley Westerman

Dr. Pamela Emanuelson

Approved:

5/8/2019	Dr. Stephenson Beck
Date	Department Chair

ABSTRACT

This paper examines young adults' perceptions of work, life, and the balance in between in light of information and communication technologies (ICTs). The intention of this study is to provide a deeper understanding of young adults' world views for the benefit of organizations. 22 undergraduate students between the ages of 18 to 40 from five different colleges at a Midwestern university participated in a focus group or one-on-one interviews. The age-frame was selected to include young adults in a life stage imperative to their career development. Central themes found in regard to technology use, work, and work/life balance included: viewing technology as access, a divide in preference of integrations vs. separation, viewing technology as expectation, viewing technology as leisure, and parental impact on present-day habits. Participant recommendations for better work/life balance are discussed. Finally, the implications of these findings for organizations are explored.

Keywords: Work/life balance, young adult, access, technology

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DEDICATION

This disquisition is dedicated to my parents Marja and Kauko Juntunen. They have selflessly provided me with all of the tools required for me to get to where I am today, even if it meant sacrifices for them. Ever since I was little, they encouraged me to try to be the best version of myself while supporting me unconditionally. They instilled the hunger for learning in me and encouraged me to challenge myself. Even in times that I did not believe in my abilities, they stood by me, and pushed me to keep on trying. Not only that, but if it wasn't for them, I would never had written this disquisition, as I wouldn't have had the chance to attend North Dakota State University for my degree. My parents, the two most hardworking and least selfish people I know, have worked so hard to provide this future for me and have made it possible with their continuous emotional and financial support, making my American dream come true.

This disquisition is also dedicated to Dr. Kirsten Theye, my undergraduate advisor from Concordia College in Moorhead, MN. Thanks to Dr. Theye, I found the field of Communication Studies, and my passion for higher education continued to grow in college, and I decided to pursue my Master's degree in Communication. Her academic and emotional support helped me find my passion and guided me on how to get to where I wanted to be.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Research Problem

Work/life balance is a topic that scholars have investigated for years. Given the considerable effect it can have on a business through the impact on employee well-being, the topic is of scholarly interest (Cowan & Hoffman, 2007; Hoffman & Cowan, 2010; Schultz, Hoffman, Fredman & Bainbridge, 2012). By definition, work/life balance is understood as the set differentiation between the domains of work and life (Clark, 2000; Clark, 2002). People tend to create their work/life balance through borders between the different domains of life (Clark, 2000; Cruz & Meisenbach, 2018), and sometimes individuals' borders get blended as the roles within each sphere blur (Cowan & Hoffman, 2007; Cruz & Meisenbach, 2018; Wright et al., 2014). In the literature, spheres are used to describe the different areas of life, work and home (Schumate & Fulk, 2004; Schultz et. al, 2012). The level to which people go to keep these domains separate depends on an array of things: what kind of work they do, whether they have family, what kind of technologies they use, and what their personalities are like (Eby, Caspar, Lockwood, Bordeaux, & Brinley, 2005; Leka & De Alwis, 2016). Overall, work/life balance is the attempted separation or integration of the two spheres, work and life, the choice and level of which depends on personal preference and job demands (Cowan & Hoffman, 2007; Leka & De Alwis, 2016; Schultz et. al, 2013)

With progressive changes in culture, technology, society, and technology's infrastructure over the years, there are new aspects of work and work/life balance to be examined. One of these aspects, which this study will focus on, is the evolution of the use of information and communication technologies (ICT's). In the past decade, more research has focused on the influence of technology and social media on perceptions of work/life balance (Gregg, 2011;

Ruppel, Gong & Tworoger, 2013; Walden, 2016). Existing research has focused on work interfering with home, and home interfering with work. It has looked at generations like Baby Boomers and Generation X in comparison to Millennials (Berkowsky, 2013; Jirasevijinda, 2018), and compared those with families to those who are single (Berkowsky, 2013; Hoffman & Cowan, 2010). In 2000, Clark theorized the individual process of creating and maintaining work/life balance by negotiating the interconnected borders of work and home. The borders are explained as a central part of the work/life balance process, as they determine individuals' role and therefore the appropriate behavior in each context (Clark, 2000). With updated technologies, these borders are becoming harder to keep up (Berkowsky, 2013; Walden, 2016) for those who prefer to separate work and life.

Today, media is more easily available through the use of portable devices, such as laptops, smartphones and tablets (Maxian, 2014; Sriwilai & Charoensukmongkol, 2015). Studies have shown that individuals between the ages of 18-45 generally own the greatest number of cell phones and tablets and use them for the widest range of things (Maxian, 2014; Zickuhr, 2011). Sriwilai & Charoensukmongkol's (2015) study on social media addiction and media dependency found that the need to use these media devices has negative influences on mindfulness and job performance, and that media have power over individuals, even when ICTs are in use leaving people to feel in control of what they consume (Maxian, 2014). Even if ICTs are seen as an opportunity for flexibility (Boswell & Olson-Buchanan, 2007; Wright et. al, 2014), we must also look at the challenges that come with them.

The great challenge with work/life balance in light of technology is that we do not know how the changes in people's use of the devices affect young adults' preference on separation or integration of the two spheres. We might know that mobile ICT devices like smartphones

2

provide an opportunity to work remotely (Leonardi, 2010; ter Hoeven et. al, 2017), but we do not

know the way in which young adults' consumption of it (Myers & Sundaram, 2012) impacts

their central concept of self, their *global identity*. One's *global identity* is the parts of individual's

different identities that combine into a coherent sense of self-identity. This can be constructed of

"goals, values, beliefs, traits, competencies, time horizons, and ways of acting, thinking and

feeling" (Asforth, 2001). Myers & Sundaram (2012) explained that "[young adults] typically use

these information systems to explore their place and identity in the world" (p. 32). Which implies

the devices can have a major impact on their sense of self.

Further, Super et. al (1957) and Levinson (1986) discussed the age frame in which people

generally tend to make the choices that have the greatest impact on their career. By the wider

definition by Levinson (1986) this age frame is 17-45, and it is classified as young adulthood

(Levinson, 1986; Super et. al, 1957). Undergraduate students, in addition to often fitting the

aforementioned age frame, are in a life stage where they make choices significant to their future

careers. This is important, as it is known that these young adults generally also employ the

electronic devices the most (Maxian, 2014; Zickuhr, 2011). It has also been studied and found

that these devices create addiction (Mazmania, Orlikowski & Yates, 2013; Kwon, So, Pil Han &

Oh, 2016). Furthermore, as found by Ashforth (2001), the individuals in a life stage to shape

their careers will be the group to potentially alter businesses and organizations they enter.

College is a time and place where, regardless of age, one can reshape a career path. Therefore, it

is important to consider college students' perceptions of work/life balance in terms of

technology.

With the general knowledge of the popularity of smartphones among young adults

(Lapierre & Lewis, 2016), and an understanding how these individuals are 'moulded' by the

devices they use (Myers & Sundaram, 2012), we need to better understand how the use impacts their perception of work/life balance to be able to prepare for welcoming them as organizational members. Further, because of the potential structural and economic impact the young adults may have on the organizations they enter (Ashforth, 2001), we must better understand their worldviews to prepare for their entrance. In addition, the potential for social learning (Bandura, 1977) and its impact on self should be noticed, as these young adults have basically grown up with technology (Dimock, 2018). Similarly, older individuals whom enter college at a later age to reshape their careers are introduced to the new way of technology consumption through interactions with younger students. We may have studied the ways in which technology visibly intrudes in people's life outside of the work setting (Walden, 2016), but if we ignore the potential for changes to the concept of self, or the well understood dependency ICT's create as a factor to challenging work/life balance, we cannot say we have fully studied and understood what technology does to work/life balance.

1.2. The Purpose and Potential Significance of Current Study

The changes taking place in society make the study and analysis of work/life balance important; organizations and careers are constantly evolving. This also translates into changes in the physical and mental balance experienced by the employees (Ashforth, 2001). One of the major changes in regard to work/life balance, among the development of technologies and advancement of capitalism, is the change in perceived balance and attitude towards work. Existing data suggest that while Generation X holds a belief that work is prioritized over personal commitments, the Millennial generation is perceived to put their own needs first (Jirasevijinda, 2018). Today's young adults who are, or closely follow, the population Jirasevijinda (2018) described have not yet been studied in terms of what they count as work

when it comes to technology mediated tasks at home. For the purposes of this study, we however, focus less on the generational terms and more on the life stage the individuals are in. According to Ashforth (2001), Super et. al (1957) and Levinson (1986), young adulthood (by broader definition, between ages 18-45) is the most crucial time for individuals' career choices. It is argued that individuals who have already been to the workplaces but choose to enroll in college to gain a new degree, are similarly in the career-altering life stage as their younger counterparts. Both the experience they gain from participating in college classes and the education not only open new career doors, but also potentially alter their thinking, making this college life stage career-altering. Therefore, this span includes the group of millennials and those young adults who have grown to consume the technologies, as well as the individuals whom are in the career-altering life stage by choice of obtaining a new degree.

The younger generation is known to be immersed in their technologies, and to expect to have the technologies available (Kirschner & Bruyckere, 2017). This could mean that they feel the need to constantly be using the devices, potentially increasing the risk of burnout due to a compromised work/life balance (Leka & De Alwis, 2016; Wright et. al, 2014). Furthermore, ter Hoeven et. al (2017) found a negative relationship between communication technology use (CTU) and employee well-being due to the unpredictability of workload with technology in place. This is a serious concern that should not be taken lightly. Per Ashforth (2001), employees are central for the direction organizations are going and organizations are shifting with the people (Ashforth, 2001). Thus, with the knowledge of technology's potential impact on concept of self and understanding the economic impact of both employee burnout and changing organizations, it is essential to understand the relationship individuals build with technology in

context of work. This could also help predict the direction that people, and technology, are going to be leading organizations (Ashforth, 2001).

1.3. Definition of Key Terms

1.3.1. Young Adult

For the purpose of this paper, young adults are defined as individuals who are between 18 and 45 years. Per Ashforth (2001), Super et. al (1957), and Levinson (1986), individuals enter their career life-stage in their early adulthood, and therefore, individuals born as late as 2000 would already be within the stage. By their definition, early adulthood is a stage from 17 to 45 (Levinson, 1986) or 22 to 44 (Super et. el, 1957). Because we are looking at individuals who use communication devices such as smartphones and tablets, and we want to look at individuals who would be the most avid users of these gadgets. Therefore, the broader, 18 to 45-year-old range is best justified for the study as they are found to use the devices the most (Maxian, 2014; Zickuhr, 2011). Furthermore, as the emphasis is on the life stage rather than age, we want to study individuals who are in college, earning a degree and thus (re)shaping their career path. Therefore, the connecting factor between individuals of such wide age-range is the current life situation, and the potential impact it has on one's career. With the understanding that young adults have grown to consume technology, people who literally grew up with technology would be of special interest (Dimock, 2018; Myers & Sundaram, 2012).

1.3.2. Work/Life Balance

Work/life balance is defined as the perceived and communicated separation or integration between work and life domains (Clark, 2000; Cowan & Hoffman, 2007; Schultz et. al, 2012). It is the attempt at balancing or combining job tasks and family, or other commitments and aspirations outside of work (Hoffman & Cowan, 2010; Maxwell & McDougall, 2004). This

balance is easiest thought of as an end goal—a 'harmony' to reach. Due to differences in personal preferences, there is no single right work/life balance (Eby, Caspar, Lockwood, Bordeaux, & Brinley, 2005; Leka & De Alwis, 2016). Often, the study of work/life balance has focused on employee experiences of work intruding home (Walden, 2016), and work/life balance is especially important as a "corrective" with the growing demands and rising speed at which businesses are operated (Gregg, 2011, p. 4). Lack of balance is found to have a potential connection to burnout (Wright et. al, 2014). Overall, work/life balance is a term that needs updating as organizations and generations change.

1.3.3. ICT Dependency and Addiction

Media dependency was originally theorized by Ball-Rokeach in 1998. The central focus of the theory was on the power relation between media and the user (Ball-Rokeach, 1998). This has since been further developed, focusing more on the individual's needs for media access and goal achievement (Maxian, 2014). With the rapid growth in use of mobile devices like smartphones, a new level of dependency resembling addiction has developed (Lapierre & Lewis, 2018). This has been shown true with both work and leisure technology usage.

With the ease of access, more people feel compelled to answer emails on their mobile devices (Mazmania, Orlikowski & Yates, 2013). On the other hand, "heavy or excessive use of social networks and gaming apps on smartphones fosters habits that can easily develop into addictive conduct [...]" (Kwon et. al, 2016, p. 920). When considering young adults who have grown up with the continuous expansion of technology, and who have developed new ways to consume technology (Myers & Sundaram, 2012), it forces us to think about the potential ramifications to work/life balance. Veissiere & Stendel (2018) explained that the addiction is not so much about the device itself, but the social capabilities that come with them. If working from

home can satisfy the need to be connected (Veissiere & Stendel, 2018), it might be a key in understanding young adults' work/life balance habits. Media has indeed been explained to impact people due to its central role in everyday goal achievement (Lee & Choi, 2018).

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1. Background

The mismatch between the current generations in the workplace has created challenges to organizational scholars, as there is no unified perception or experience of work/life balance. Against the common assumption, the difference in perceptions between generations, which has often resulted in misunderstandings and even conflicts, is not unique to Millennials, but has been around for years prior (Jirasevijinda, 2018). For that reason, it is not likely the upcoming entrance of younger generations into the workplace will be any easier. This stresses the importance of understanding the perceptions these young adults have of work and work/life balance, to make the transition smoother for both parties. The constantly changing nature of organizations also keeps the topic of work/life balance timely.

In addition to the generational differences, the widespread use of ICTs extending work to home is a potential threat to employers – if employees are continuously bringing work from home, they may begin to feel there is a work/life imbalance (Wright et al., 2014) instead of balance. Although there is research supporting a variety of negative consequences of lack of work/life balance, it is not yet known how these consequences would be different for the younger generation, as they don't only use technology, but it is shaping their lives (Myers & Sundaram, 2012). The main difference between standard technology use and young adults' experience with technology is that they are "highly connected, experiential, social, and in need of instant gratification" (Myers & Sundaram, 2012). The technology's impact on their lives could have many consequences, of which researchers and employers are not yet aware of. One of these consequences could be increased stress, potentially leading to a variety of problems. Therefore, as stated above, this study will seek to establish an understanding of how young adults view

work/life balance, and how their predisposition to ICTs impact how they perceive work/life balance.

2.2. Border and Boundary Theories

In a traditional setting, work and home are separated by physical location (Clark, 2000). Border Theory suggests that work and life are divided into two domains, with borders "defining the point at which domain relevant behavior begins or ends" (Clark, 2000, p. 756). Communication is a central factor of the establishment and maintenance of these two roles and boundaries (Clark, 2000; Cowan & Hoffman, 2007; Schumate & Fulk, 2004). The borders can be divided into three categories: physical, temporal, or psychological (Clark, 2000; Cowan & Hoffman, 2007). The strength of these borders determines how well work and life are separated. Boundary theory is taking a step further, focusing on the permeable borders, acknowledging people can manage them through segmentation or integration; keeping them separate or attempting to combine the two worlds (Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000; Wepfer, 2018). In their traditional forms, these theories with these borders and boundaries resemble role-transitions, as discussed by Ashforth (2001). Individuals hold different roles in different contexts, within their global identity (Ashforth, 2001), and switch between the roles as they cross over the boundaries. Communication helps establish these role transitions (Schumate & Fulk, 2004). As discussed, there are different kinds of borders: concrete, such as the environment, but also intangible, like working hours (Clark, 2000). These boundaries are defined by their flexibility and permeability, focusing on the level to which they can change, or items from other domains can enter the particular domain (Clark, 2000).

With technology such as smartphones, these borders have become more blended (Berkowsky, 2013; Golden, 2013; Ruppel, Gong & Tworoger, 2013; Tremblay & Genin, 2008).

Individuals do not only personally cross the boundaries, but also bring their ICT devices across the boundaries, making separation more challenging (Golden, 2013). People can, and do, use their cell phones for work-related communication during time that should be allotted to personal life (Mazmanian, Orlikowski, & Yates, 2013). The introduction and continuous growth of and reliance on the Internet has had a major impact on business, the surrounding communities, and capitalism which is at the heart of business. The growth of capitalism has created a desire for more, speeding up the pace in the work-world (Gregg, 2011).With the changes in pace, and society demanding more from each generation, businesses have tried to keep up with changes in employee population and their needs by providing more flexible work arrangements (Kristensen & Pedersen, 2017; ter Hoeven, Miller, Peper & den Dulk, 2017).

With flexibility, however, comes a price; when working from home, the previously clear and concrete boundaries between work and home easily become distorted (Harrington & Ladge, 2009; Jordan, 2009; Lal & Dwivedi, 2010; Maryama, Hopkinson & James, 2009; Ruppel, Gong & Tworoger, 2013). As found by Mazmanian, Orlikowski & Yates (2013) the access these devices provide has turned occasional connectivity into a norm. While in the past participants could leave work at work when crossing the physical boundary (Schultz et al, 2012), and while role transitioning (Ashforth, 2001), this option does not apply with technology. Berkowsky (2013) found that over 60% of people stated they look at their work email multiple times a day. The evolved ICT's have provided opportunities never had before, such as the aforementioned ability to work remotely. By allowing the boundaries to be more flexible, individuals may ease their perceived task of managing personal lives, but they often open up a door to let work enter their home domain as well (Schultz et al, 2012). With the spread of technology, we must revisit

11

these borders and boundaries, and the ways in which people attempt to establish, maintain, and communicate them (Kreiner, Hollensbe & Sheep, 2009).

2.3. ICTs in the Workplace

The rapid growth of information and communication technologies has changed the way a lot of people work, or define the line between home and work, including communicating expectations (Berkowski, 2013; Gregg, 2011; Kreiner, Hollensbe & Sheep, 2009; Walden, 2016). ICT devices have certainly added a layer of ease and flexibility to communication. Furthermore, flexibility in the workplace is marketed as a convenience for the employees – but it often leads to difficulty holding a balance between home and work (Leonardi, Treem, & Jackson, 2010; Tremblay & Genin, 2008). Mazmanian, Orlikowski, & Yates (2013) found that professionals' use of "mobile email devices to manage their communication were enacting a norm of continual connectivity and accessibility that produced a number of contradictory outcomes" (p. 1337). This suggests that the behavior associated with ICT use is communicating a certain way to both the work and the life sphere. As suggested by social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), people learn through observation, as could be the case with social norms and ICT use. In fact, working with mobile devices has even been pushed so far that some employees expect to be bringing work home (Berkowski, 2013; Tremblay & Genin, 2008). For some, the gratification they get from fulfilling their job duties on their own time is a reason enough to do work at home (Gregg, 2011). These all are factors that lead to ICT use, originally intended as a way for flexibility with work, becoming a counterproductive tool for the employees.

ICT devices allow for work to be brought outside of the traditional context, and even traditional hours (Fenner & Renn, 2004; Ruppel, Gong & Tworoger, 2013), and are often marketed to employees as a way to allow flexibility (Boswell & Olson-Buchanan, 2010; Fenner

& Renn, 2004). However, the use of ICTs for flexible working arrangements is often used as a means of organizational control either directly through work assignments, or via the seductiveness of ICTs (Golden, 2013). Sometimes the challenge can be the unpredictability of the tasks communicated via ICTs (Ter Hoeven, van Zoonen & Fonner, 2016). This can be challenging for the well-being of individuals, as it means one is connected and available for work around the clock (Tremblay & Genin, 2008). Clark (2000) explained that the unpredictable requests can be avoided with better communication between the work and life domains, as it helps people understand the "border-crosser's other-domain responsibilities" (p. 27). This goes against the traditional border of separating work and life, where individuals can leave their work at work when their scheduled hours are done (Schultz et. al 2012).

These changes have also created a gap between generations; ideologies between generations have grown to be different as older individuals are adapting to new ways that are custom to the younger generations (Myers & Sundaram, 2012). These differences between generations challenge workplaces, as they work on fulfilling the needs of employees from multiple age groups. While most research on "digital natives" acknowledges the understanding these individuals have regarding technology, it has been argued in the field of Instructional Communication that research does not back up the claims that "digital natives" are any better versed in technology than "digital immigrants" (referring to those in older generations, born prior to when ICTs became as popularly consumed) (Kirschner & De Bruycker, 2017). Their approach fails to understand that being a "digital native" does not simply refer to one's technological skills, but the lifestyle these young adults have grown to lead (Myers & Sundaram, 2012). Furthermore, on the contrary to Kirschner & De Bryucker's (2017) argument, Barak (2018)

found that undergraduate students (their participants being young Millennials and early post-Millennials),

> […] who are proficient in information and communication technologies (ICTs), were
> found to be thinking more flexibly and less inclined to resist change, than those who are
> less technology proficient […] ICT proficient students are more inclined to listen to
> diverse opinions and less inclined to do the same things repeatedly (p. 121).

These differences between older generations and younger ones entering the workforce are significant. Another major aspect of young adults is the way in which the technology has shaped their lives: "[they] are not merely using technology differently; rather, their lives are being molded by technology in a new way. They are digitally literate, highly connected, experiential, social, and in need of instant gratification" (Myers & Sundaram, 2012, p.32). Through this transformation young adults have grown to be different from their predecessors. This new incorporation of technological devices into everyday life, and the expectations that come with them are crucial to know to prepare for the integration of these young adults into the workforce. They might require a different approach to management than generations prior. In addition, it is important to understand how this constant connectivity will shape the way in which young adults think of work/life balance (Myers & Sundaram, 2012).

However, the overarching definition for the term 'digital native' describes the individuals who can be called "digital natives" to be well versed in technology, especially in ICTs (Barak, 2018; Myers & Sundaram, 2012). The age therefore is not, and should not be, the only defining factor: if the individual did not grow up with access to the digital devices, they would not be able to have the extensive knowledge and relationship with it. It appears most research has ignored this fact in their arguments defining the generation to call "digital natives," simply assuming they

are natives because they were born within a certain period (Kirschner & De Bruyckere, 2017; Barak, 2018). Therefore, this study focuses on young adults with access to these devices, to understand how their concept of self, work and work/life balance has been impacted by their ICT usage.

The focus of this study is on two ICTs that are bridging the gap between work and home today due to their mobility and perceived ease and convenience—smartphones and tablets. Both of these were brought to the market in the early 2000s with the introduction of tablets (2000) and the rise of the smartphones (2007) (Bort, 2013; Phillips, 2014). The significance of these two devices is justified, as the impact of their introduction on work/life balance can deduced from the rapid increase of studies focusing blurred work/life boundaries.

2.4. ICT Addiction

One of the most important aspects of young adults in regard to understanding how they perceive and manage the work/life balance is what research has suggested about their connection to ICTs. When addressing employee burnout as a result of work/life conflict, Wright et al. (2014) pointed out the potential impact individual dependency on communication technologies might have on determining how often the individuals check their ICTs at home. Although Wright et. al did not specifically name young adults, research suggests they are a population prone to addictive ICT use habits (Kwon. et al., 2016; Veissiere & Stendel, 2018), and therefore this is a special point of concern. Another potential factor that could be emphasized in the younger generations is the level of ambition the individual has (Boswell & Olson-Buchanan, 2007). It seems self-explanatory that higher level of ambition equals to greater effort they are willing to put in. Boswell & Olson-Buchanan (2007) considered individuals' high ambition as a potential threat and contradiction to work/life balance in their research:

15

Ambitious individuals are likely to work long and hard, putting in the extra effort, striving to get ahead and achieve professional and personal success. Staying connected after hours may be seen as a means to get ahead in the organization or profession more generally (p. 595).

Furthermore, Gregg (2011) discussed how individuals tend to check their emails or meeting times in their free-time to "prepare" for work (p. 47). While this ambition and connectivity to work through ICTs could be seen as a positive, and often is perceived as having control (Gregg 2011), it should be considered with a general concern. Research has also revealed a true addiction many young adults have to their smartphones – or to the social rewards received from using them (Kwon et. al, 2016; Lapierre & Lewis, 2018; Veissiere & Stendel, 2018; Wright et. al, 2014). If individuals get too connected, they may get more stressed and even burn out (Boswell & Olson-Buchanan, 2007; Wright et al., 2014). Furthermore, Maxian (2014) discussed how the "constant access to information" could result in weaker sense of control, because "media provided information for goal achievement is a need that requires constant attention and fulfillment," (p. 276). This again, could reduce the perceived work/life balance employees have. As the members of the younger generation are known to be more immersed in technology, it is likely they will partake in such habits.

2.5. Global Identity and Impact on Organizations

As previously discussed, another area of interest is the way in which young adults define their 'global identity' (Ashforth, 2001, p. 40). By definition, this refers to the parts of individual's different identities that combine into a coherent sense of self-identity (Ashforth, 2001). While it could be assumed that previous generations may have had work as one of their most central identities due to the shared belief of work coming before their personal interests

16

(Jirasevijinda, 2018; Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010), we do not know how important the younger generations perceive work to be to their identities. The younger generations are not only using technology but grew up simultaneously with it and are shaped by it (Barak, 2018; Myers & Sundaram, 2012). It is known that they expect to carry their devices on them (Myers & Sundaram, 2015), but we don't know if that means they view work and work/life balance differently than the generations prior to them. It is important to learn more about the ways in which technology and work shape their 'global identities,' as the identities can help us understand the different role transitions they make, impacting the need for and perception of work/life balance.

We must also acknowledge the changes in the world. We must understand how organizations are changing, and how the individual identities and roles shape these changes. Young adults are, after all, just beginning to get to the life-stage that will shape their careers, and with that, organizations for years to come (Ashforth, 2001). With the growth of the role ICTs hold in business operations, and in people's everyday work lives, it is important to understand the role of the technology in their lives. Therefore, the greatest change with the growing use of technology is its impact on the people. With the understanding of technological development, we must focus on the change it implies to people and their concept of self. Ashforth (2001) described this construction of *global identity* as people's role identities, consisting of "goals, values, beliefs, traits competencies, time horizons, and ways of acting, thinking and feeling" (p. 35). These identities form through social learning (Bandura, 1977) and through personal experiences and continue to grow throughout the years (Ashforth, 2001). If the young adults are excessive users of ICT devices, it is likely these devices grow onto them to become a part of their global identity.

Furthermore, these borders discussed by Clark (2000) connect closely with roles within each space. Per Ashforth (2001), individuals go through role transitions throughout their lives. There are different levels of role transitions: there are transitions that take place on a daily basis, even on a situational basis, and there are different life stages that involve *macro* changes over the course of the years (Ashforth, 2001). What unites all roles is communication. "Roles are the result of a negotiation between the focal person and those with whom he interacts. This negotiation is not merely a mental exercise, but a communicative one" (Schumate & Fulk, 2004, p. 58). Role transitions involving life changes are especially essential for business managers to understand. Super et. al (1957) developed a model that states the life stage with the greatest impact on one's career is that of 25-44. Later Levinson (1986) argued that ages 17-45 are the most dynamic period in an individual's life. To advance theory, it is essential to understand the youngest generation in the current career-life stage at a more finite level, as these stages are lengthy, and they encompass a wide range of individuals. Individuals beginning their careers today will be the employees occupying the dynamic, career-altering stage potentially for over 20 years to come, changing how we think about work. It is essential to look at these young adults, as the youngest of the individuals described by Levinson (1986) are now getting to their early twenties, beginning to reach the ages in which they will be making their major career choices, potentially re-shaping organizations. We must also acknowledge the significance of communication for role transitioning and boundary work: without it, we cannot establish, maintain, or express them (Schumate & Fulk, 2004).

In addition to role changes, research has used existing theories to explain how the traditional borders are blurred due to the growing use of ICTs (Berkowsky, 2013; Tremblay & Genin, 2008). What contemporary research has not yet thoroughly investigated is the youngest

generation new to the career stage, sometimes referred to as post-Millenials (Dimock, 2018), sometimes referred to as Generation Z (Desai & Lele, 2017; Loveland, 2017; Turner, 2015). As these young adults are only newcomers to their life-stage where the career plays a central role (Ashforth, 2001), the need to understand their worldviews is growing at the same pace the generation is aging. The young adults who were born after 1997 have been found to not only use technology, but to have their lives shaped by it (Myers & Sundaram, 2012). There is little information on how these young adults define work, and even less on their definition of work/life balance. Further, there is not enough information on how their attitudes and tendencies towards ICT devices may change the way we talk about work/life balance.

Finally, as there are various factors that can decrease the perceived work/life balance, it is important to gain a deeper understanding on the young adults' preferences, as it has been found poor perceived work/life balance can cause stress and potential burnout (Wright et. al, 2014). Since these individuals are in a key role in determining the direction and success of the businesses, we must better understand the relationship with technology, and the individuals' changing understanding of work/life balance.

2.6. Definition of Research Questions

There is a clear gap in research when it comes to understanding the newest generation in the workforce. Therefore, this paper focuses on establishing how young adults' perception of work and work/life balance is shaped by technology. The infrastructure of today is far different from that of the older generations' young adulthood. Perhaps those who are used to putting work first did not have the problem of having work physically come home with them, because the infrastructure did not permit it. Or perhaps they are not familiar with what it would feel like to have one's life shaped by technology (Myers & Sundaram, 2012; Palvia & Brown, 2015), or

perhaps they do not feel the expectation to be constantly connected, like employees are expected today (Boswell & Olson-Buchanan, 2007; Palvia & Brown, 2015). For the purposes of this study, a young adult is defined as an individual between the age of 18 to 45, and thus in the life stage where they "establish their professional identities" (Ashford, 2001, p. 248). The widespread ideology on what was deemed necessary or gratifying in society has shifted. Much research has focused on technology mingling its way into workplaces (Gregg, 2011; Walden, 2016), the media's growing impact on society, and older generations' attitudes towards change and increasing levels of media use (Jirasevijinda, 2018). How is technology perceived in relation to space and work/life balance, when one has grown to consume it (Myers & Sundaram, 2012)?

First, this paper aims to provide insight in how changes in digital infrastructure in organizations, and changes in use of personal technology, may have changed the way in which people perceive work, life, and the balance in between. Second, with little to no research being conducted on young adults' perceptions of work/life balance in light of technology, this paper aims to serve as a starting point in understanding how this new population could be different, hopefully helping workplaces in adjusting to the new normal. With the existing knowledge of young adults' tendency to be users of smartphones, and the potential addiction excessive use of the devices can result in (Kwon. et al., 2016; Veissiere & Stendel, 2018), it is important to understand how they tend to perceive work and life spheres. This population will potentially change the ways in which organizations are run (Ashforth, 2001). Therefore, to understand how young adults think of work/life balance, I ask:

RQ1: *How do young adults perceive work/life boundaries in light of technology?*
For a holistic understanding of young adults' perceptions of work/life balance, the participants were asked to define work/life balance, prior to exploring how they perceived the balance.

Furthermore, with the significant changes in information technology communication infrastructure, and in the availability of mobile devices as tools in people's lives, we must understand how ideal work/life balance might have shifted. The study gauged whether the young adults expect to have their communication devices on them at all times and expect to be accessible for work-related contacts at any given time. It also explored how the participants' ideal work/life balance compares to their lived experience. As it is generally assumed that the younger generations consume and are consumed by, social media and information and communication technology (Myers & Sundaram, 2012), it is assumed that this correlates to their professional lives as well.

With the understanding of the importance of communication in boundary management (Clark, 2000; Cowan & Hoffman, 2007; Schumate & Fulk, 2004), this study wishes to better understand how young adults communicate with their devices, and how that impacts work/life balance. Cruz and Meisenbach (2018) explained that a "communicative lens" is especially helpful in understanding work/life boundary management, as "individuals' communication and embodied actions in everyday life shape and are shaped by the processes that constitute role boundaries" (p. 183). This explanation is in line with Mazmanian, Orlikowski, & Yates' (2013) findings, reporting the non-verbal communication of norms through use of ICTs to work emails from home. Therefore, the technology use and its implications to perceived work/life balance is of special interest. It is important to understand how habitual use of these devices impacts the verbal, or non-verbal communication of work/life balance.

3. METHOD

3.1. Methodology

Qualitative methodologies were used to understand how young adults perceive work/life balance and to understand their relationship to technology, as well as the relationship's impact on their idea of work/life balance. The task of social scientists is to "see those things that people in everyday life cannot" (Luker, 2010, p. 34). Instead of simply reporting the obvious on how people make sense of the world, this study investigated it a little bit further, to shed light on the reasons, and to find what cannot be seen by simply looking at the surface (Luker, 2010). The research question was first explored through a focus groups to best create an environment conducive to young students to feel comfortable sharing their experience and perspective (Kruger & Casey, 2000). Further, the focus group was intended as a pilot study to gather data for finalizing the interview-questions. Both of these methods were suitable to gain a better understanding of the worldview of the participants (Saldaña, 2016).

Considering that there is limited information on the current young adult generations' perspective on work/life balance, qualitative methods are best suited for this study. This allows elaborated answers, ensuring a deeper understanding of the participants' worldviews (Saldaña, 2016). One focus group was conducted with five participants, and a total of 17 one-on-one semi-structured interviews [with an average length of 29:44] were conducted. The focus group took place at the end of February of 2019, and the interviews began approximately a week after the focus group, going into mid-March. Qualitative research was chosen to best explore the participants' experiences and perceptions, allowing for elaboration as necessary (Kruger & Casey, 2000). This allowed for deeper understanding of their experiences.

3.2. Participants

The participants were recruited from a mid-sized Midwestern university. The recruitment for this study was completed through purposive sampling via announcements to several undergraduate classes in the field of communication. Course or extra credit was offered as an incentive. All of the participants completed an anonymous demographic survey (see appendix A), and informed consent was obtained prior to getting into the protocol (see appendices B & C). Institutional Review Board approved all the procedures. The invitation to participate in the focus group and interviews was open for individuals who met certain defining criteria, allowing generalization within that group (Luker, 2010). This approach was chosen to ensure that the individuals in the sample have the characteristics that were under analysis. The specific criteria for the study required each participant to be over the age of 18, be fluent in English, own and use a smartphone or a tablet, and have had a job within the past year. The inclusion of each limiting characteristic was deliberate. Individuals under 18-years of age were purposefully excluded, as minor participation was not of interest to the study. Although no upper age cap was set, it was anticipated all undergraduate participants would be in the life stage that qualifies them as young adults (18-45 years, as per Super et. al, (1957) and Levinson (1986)).

Although previous research has included samples of white-collar workers who brought technology mediated work home (Golden, 2012), there was no inclusion criteria set for specific majors or jobs the participants held. As the main focus of the study was to gain understanding on how young adults view work and life in light of technology in general, not specifically in any set profession, no limits in respect to profession were deemed necessary. Lastly, as the study looked into the impact of one's relationship to ICTs as a factor in perception of work/life balance, the inclusion of criteria for owning a smartphone or a tablet was necessary. Despite the purposive

sampling, the validity of the data was not threatened. The purpose of this study was to gain understanding and insight of the new generation, and not to make statistical generalizations applicable to a wider population, which is why purposive sample was necessary.

Including the focus group participants and interviewees, the sample of the study consisted of 9 students identifying as male and 13 students identifying as female. The sample was mostly white, with 18 participants identifying as Caucasian, two as Hispanic, one as Asian, and one as Middle-Eastern. This provides a fairly accurate representation of the diversity on the campus where data was collected. The participants ranged between 18 and 40 years of age, with the majority (n=19) being 18 to 22 years of age. All of the participants fit the criteria of young adult for the study (18 to 45 years of age as per Super et al. 1957 and Levinson 1986). A majority of the participants were communication students (n=15), but the sample represented five different colleges on the campus. All but one participant defined their field of study. When describing their personal technology habits, all but two participants (n=20) always had their phone on them, and all but two (n=20) used their device every day, or more often than daily. One participant declined to answer, and one indicated they didn't use the device often.

3.3. Data Collection

The data collection took place in late February and the beginning of March 2019. The focus group was conducted first. The interview protocol's wording was adjusted to better fit interviews (see Appendix C). All data collection took place in a conference room on campus. Participants were given an incentive to participate with class or extra credit, which ever was applicable to their class. Theoretical saturation, meaning no new information was emerging from data during coding, was reached after one focus group and 17 interviews (n=22) (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 138). The focus group and the interview protocols (see Appendices B & C)

consisted of 10 questions focusing on ICT usage, work with technology, and family experiences with work and ICTs. The focus group lasted approximately 50 minutes, and the interviews ranged between 22 and 41 minutes [with an average length of 29:44]. The focus group was moderated by the researcher, and an assistant was present to take detailed notes and observe the participant interactions. This allowed the researcher to focus on the conversation better, and to follow up on any information that was brought up by participants. The interviews were all conducted one-on-one with the researcher. The focus group was used as a pilot study, and therefore the participant data from the focus group was only used to help support findings from the interviews and to develop the questions for the interviews beyond the questions formulated based on existing literature. No participant quotes were selected for the analysis discussed in chapter four.

Preliminary data-analysis began immediately after the data collection process was started and was continued throughout the data collection process. The preliminary analysis was conducted through study of field notes, analytical memos, and by listening through transcripts to check for accuracy. Field notes are especially important to find congruences between the data (Charmaz, 2014). Through this process, common themes began to emerge from the data early on. One of the central themes to emerge was access – this helped frame the interpretations of the data through the perceptions of, as well as benefits and drawbacks of said access. The preliminary analysis was also conducted to ensure that the set of questions in the semi-structured protocol were clear to participants, and participants were answering the questions intended to be asked from them. Further, as discussed, the focus group served as an initial access point to understanding the young adults' world views, and the data from the focus group informed the questions asked in the subsequent interviews. Follow up questions such as "The concept of

access has been brought up in previous interviews in relation to benefits of these devices. How does that compare to your experience?" and "previous participants have discussed training completed at home to count as work in some instances, but not in others. How does that compare to your experience?" were added on in the later interviews.

Some of the original questions on the protocol, written with existing literature in mind included "How do you feel about the idea of bringing work home?" and "In your opinion, what would count as doing work from home?" to investigate participant attitudes towards separation and integration of the two worlds. One question ("Many students report feeling the need to constantly check their phone for notifications. How does that compare to your experience?") was used to better understand how pertinent ICTs are during one's day. The participants were also asked to define what work/life balance means to them to better understand their perception. To assess the impact of one's upbringing, a section of the protocol focused on describing what and how much technology was used in their household. In addition, participants were asked to describe whether they recall their parents or guardians bringing work home by answering emails, calls, or pages on their ICT devices. For participants who identified that their parents or guardians did bring work home, a question about their feelings was included to gauge the effect it had on them.

The transcription process was outsourced to a third-party transcription service, Temi.com, and was completed immediately after each interview. The transcripts were proofread and edited for accuracy and for preliminary open coding by the researcher. During transcription edits, all participants were assigned pseudonyms to protect their anonymity (please see appendix D). No names were listed on the audio in the first place. Validity of data was assessed through

follow-up questions in the later interviews, asking participants how what had been brought up by others compared to their personal experience (Maxwell, 2013).

3.4. Data Analysis

As described, the preliminary data analysis began immediately after the initial rounds of data collection and was an ongoing process that continued through the data collection and into the middle of March 2019. An inductive coding approach was applied, based on the common themes found in the preliminary analysis of the data. This guided the assortment of minor themes. The data were open-coded while the transcripts were being checked for accuracy, and memos and field notes were analyzed to ensure vital information did not go unrecorded. An additional round of open coding was conducted with *in-vivo coding*, highlighting participant quotes that represent the data. The second round of open coding used *in-vivo coding* as it is fit for multiple participants, and for bringing out marginalized voices (Saldaña, 2016). With qualitative studies, especially explorative research, it is important to get the participant voices heard, and for that, *in vivo* coding is particularly useful. This method also helped deepen our understanding of young adults' worldview on work/life balance, as direct participant quotes were used to make sense of the data (Saldaña, 2016). After the first two rounds of coding, *emotional coding* was used as the data yielded a lot of quotes to which participant emotions were central. Furthermore, as the purpose of the study was to understand how young adults perceive work/life balance in light of technology, understanding of their emotions tied to their experiences was essential (Saldaña, 2016). Finally, questions about working from home, and feelings on parents' or guardians' work from home brought up several tensions between participant answers in the initial rounds of coding, and therefore *versus coding* was applied (Saldaña, 2016). This allowed for a better understanding of the tensions.

The analysis of the interviews yielded a total of 23 codes explaining how young adults perceive work/life balance, which were categorized through axial and theoretical coding in the second cycle of the coding process after three rounds of open coding (Saldaña, 2016).The data and number of codes was also reduced by constant comparative analysis, to remove duplicates (Gibbs, 2007). Axial coding was the method through which the codes identified through the open coding phase were categorized, reducing the number of codes further. The purpose of using axial coding as a method was to "determine which [codes] in the research are the dominant ones, and which are the less important ones" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 148). This coding cycle was useful in preparation for the final, theoretical coding, which narrowed down the data to "umbrella terms" covering the other codes and narrowing it all down to a few key themes (Saldaña, 2016, p.250). Through code mapping and theoretical coding, the categories were condensed and organized and eventually developed into six major themes described in detail in chapter four (Saldaña, 2016). All of the categories tied to the central theme of *access*.

4. FINDINGS

The demographic survey found that nearly all of the participants always have their phone on them (n=20), and that the same majority (n=20) uses their phone daily, or more frequently (see table 1). This supports Maxian (2014) and Zickuhr's (2011) findings on levels of smartphone use among 18-45-year-olds.

Table 1

Demographics on smartphone/tablet use

How Often Device Used	# of respondents	How Often Phone on Them	# of respondents
Daily	9	Always	20
Multiple times a day	7	2/3 of the day	1
A few hours a day	4	Not often	1
Never/ No response	2		

Further, the results of the study indicate that young adults' perceptions of technology, work, and the balance in between can be divided into five major categories. Participants seem to agree that ICT devices allow convenience but acknowledge the challenges that come with it. These themes explaining perceptions young adults have of work/life balance and technology are discussed further below. The findings of the study were divided in six categories as shown in the tables below. Table two highlights the five categories and their subcategories describing how participants perceive work, life, and technology. Each column represents a major category (first row) and subcategories underneath.

Table 2

The findings categorized

Technology As Access	Work/Life Balance	Technology As An Expectation	Technology As Leisure	Parental Impact
Benefits of Access	Theory vs. Practice	"Unspoken Rule"	Lack of Presence	Frustration vs. Neutral
App for Work	Technology as a Bridge	Fear of Consequences		
Drawbacks of Access	Us vs. Them	"You're on it Anyway"		
Curiosity vs. Anxiety	Guilt			

Table 3

Participant recommendations for a better work/life balance

Personal Recommendations	Workplace Recommendations
Prioritize and evaluate what is most important to you.	Cut back on tasks or hours at work.
Set a specific time that is dedicated for work.	Talk to the management about your situation.
Remove the convenience factor from your device.	

Table 3 focuses on the recommendations participants provided to help strengthen work/life balance. These categories described the relationship young adults have with their smartphones, how it impacts their work/life balance, and how they perceive work, life and the balance in between. All of the data was gathered through the one-on-one interviews, as the focus group was only used to develop the original interview questions beyond. No participant quotations were extracted from the focus group.

4.1. Work/Life Balance

4.1.1. "Theory" vs. "Practice"

Something surprising that was brought up when discussing the idea of bringing work home or defining work/life balance, was that the reality and ideal example did not correspond. Several participants explained what they preferred, and then continued to explain their reality: "In theory? I would prefer not to [...] In practice, I definitely take work home" (Phoebe). Similarly, Viona explained:

I personally don't like it. I've done it. [...] The idea of bringing it home, especially if you're an hourly worker and having to catch up on stuff at home, I just don't think that it's super healthy. Just because I think it gets in the way of possibly having a good balance, and you get super consumed in your work.

The health risks of bringing work home was brought up by several of the participants: "You end up being more stressed out about it and not getting that mental stage of relaxation" (Meredith). This was seen to impact the work/life balance, weakening the borders: "Once you blur those lines between work and home, I think [is] where the mental problems start happening, and that sadness kicks in, just because to always be constantly on 24/7 is tiring" (Brady). Participants, however, seemed to generally acknowledge that there are differences between personal preferences individuals have when it comes to work/life balance, explaining it is "different for everyone" (Grace), and that it "depends on the person" (Brady).

Some participants who acknowledged their personal actions go against their general opinion, denied any fault in their actions, yet agreed that in theory they feel work should not be brought home: "In my case, I think it's fine because it works well. Generally, I think work should be left at work" (Derek). Some described it to be okay in some instances as long as it

didn't become a habit. Many participants explained, that while they do not prefer to bring work home, they understand that sometimes it is a necessity. As Megan described it: "I don't like the idea. Sometimes it is necessary, but I really prefer to have like a separation between work and my personal life." The necessity of bringing work home is discussed in more detail under "Technology as Expectation."

4.1.2. Technology as a Bridge

Participants seemed to acknowledge that technology is bridging the distance between work and home. The question of whether it was seen as a positive or negative created a slight division in the sample. There were individuals who did not mind working from home, and/or who were thankful for the opportunity technology provides by allowing them to complete tasks at home. Nancy explained how it was essential for her to have the technology to complete the necessary preparation for work at home:

> I mean, I can't do most of my stuff without my phone honestly, or with other computer
>
> for work. I really need that technology so I can look up activities for us to do or I feel I
>
> can do my training cause all my training is online. So I need to be able to access it.

Similarly, Cameron explained: "I actually like the idea [of bringing work home]. I like to work. And I like to use applications to make my life easier, and I actually like the idea that you can bring a lot of your work home with these applications." Ryder expressed the flexibility to be a positive effect, yet also touched on the negatives of having work home: "I love it because I can sort of do things on my own schedule, but it's always there and available. But it's on my mind, so I want to do it now." The other side thought the technology was challenging their chances of separating work and life spheres:

[Technology] makes it harder to disconnect. Your email is on your phone, you get emails

all the time at any random hour and you can check it on your phone because it's right

there. So, when you physically remove yourself from a physical environment, to a

different physical environment, your phone is basically a bridge to that other environment

you left. (Brady)

This inability to disconnect was highlighting the fact that these mobile ICT devices remove the

opportunity to clearly separate work and life by physical location.

4.1.3. Us vs. Them

When talking about work/life balance and bringing work home, a few participants

described sacrifices to their work/life balance through an us vs. them perspective. This

perspective perceives the employees as "us" and the management as "them." Work was often

perceived to either benefit the employer, or the employee, not both. This also carried over to the

young adults' definition of working from home. Tasks completed from home were judged to be

work based on whether they were completed for personal growth or not. Brady described:

I think working from home is when you don't personally grow. If you got an email that

said, oh I need you to write this paper for this employer, and you sit down for two hours

to write this paper, you benefited this company and that's work from home. Did you

benefit anything from those two hours? Chances are, probably not.

This idea of one's own needs vs. the company needs was also touched on by Derek, who was

weighing the importance of the life- side of the work/life balance equation: "You have your own

life too. And I think that's more important [than work] but that might not be more important to

the management." He further elaborated that being constantly pulled to work after hours "to

make money for whatever company you work for" is not how it should be. Nathaniel further evaluated this by assigning monetary value to his time:

> My time is worth $13 an hour, so then I would maybe value my own time on the weekend more than that, maybe $15 an hour. So being able to weigh, if I work three extra hours at home, I will get this much more value at work. Like, Saturday morning, spending it looking at memes, that's maybe worth not much time or money, if I spend that time working on my hobby, that's worth a lot.

There is a clear indication on the value of personal time, and completing work to benefit oneself, versus simply working to benefit the company. If completing work from home does not provide a greater monetary benefit to the individual, then personal time is more valuable than spending the time doing work. Brady elaborated that simply doing a task to avoid consequences is not benefitting oneself: "You know, I kept my job but that was it. I don't think that's your personal growth. And I think that benefits your company. So I think for me that's what work from home means." Furthermore, the us vs. them contrast was highlighted in participant responses describing feeling angry or frustrated when a work task had to take priority over an important event for them. Amelia explained feeling frustrated because "my boss didn't understand [my personal event] was an important thing to me." These findings suggest that young adults expect to be putting in work from home but also expect a certain level of understanding from the management in return.

4.1.4. Guilt

The final major concept brought up in regard to working from home was the concept of guilt. Guilt was expressed to be a motivator but was also present in participants' answers in relation to work, life and the balance in between. This was again, however, a split concept. Guilt

was experienced toward the business, if one wasn't available, but also toward family if something was missed due to work. Participants described feeling guilted into working as Amelia put it: "I felt like I needed to say 'okay, I'll work on this when I go home' just because [my boss] would usually stay later than I would and so then I would always feel guilty." And on the opposite side, expressed feeling guilty if they missed out on an event due to a work priority, as Phoebe explained it:

> I feel like I'd be guilty, because, you know, especially for something that has already been planned and that I've already committed to for my family. [...] So I feel really guilty because I committed to something without actually, legitimately committing to it.

It seemed guilt was a byproduct of the choice of choosing to work or not to work from home. If participants didn't want to work from home, they felt guilt for the choice, and if they did, they felt guilty towards their friends and family who they were letting down. The concept of feeling guilted into working from home closely related to the following theme of expectation associated with working from home given the access smartphones provide.

4.2. Technology and Expectation

4.2.1. "Unspoken Rule"

Generally, as touched on with the concept of guilt, when the topic of bringing work home was brought up, the majority of participants described feeling the need to do work when they received the email or noticed the notification on their free time. The expectation could be seen in something as simple as: "So like say, your boss sends you an email saying 'hey, can you do this?' He expects you to see it, and probably to do it" (Derek). But the expectation of completing these work tasks from home was described in a few different ways by the respondents. First of them was that it was described as a concept that was not explicitly stated, but rather implied.

35

Viona explained it as "kind of almost like an unwritten rule," whereas Amelia regarded it as "an unspoken expectation of just bringing your work home." Although both agreed that this was not an explicit expectation shared by the managers, the majority of participants acknowledged feeling the pressure of the expectation.

Furthermore, the idea of this expectation being formulated by the society was brought up by Brady, who explained that most of the expectations one wrestles with are "common sense, most of them are society. There's always an expectation just to get your work done. And when you don't get that done, the expectation goes with you." This idea of work being completed, either at work or at home if it didn't get done at work seems to be commonly accepted among young adults. Meredith elaborated on this notion of societal influence by adding that "I would say we learn even from a young age that you need to get back within like a timely manner." The need to be available and responsive in a timely manner was describe as "almost like you're more accountable for your communicating" (Amelia).

It was commonly accepted that if you own a smartphone, you are available and therefore you need to provide timely responses. Phoebe speculated that smartphones were intended to simply be convenient, but "maybe an unintended side effect [of convenience] is that expectation, that has been built up over time, even if it is not necessarily extrinsically expected." If the individuals aren't adding that convenience of being able to access people at all times in all places, they aren't doing what they were designed to do. Furthermore, the expectation to complete work was described by Derek as cultural: "There's like a culture, I feel. That you're expected to put work first of all. Especially in America," and generational by Brady:

The generation that will be incoming to that work place have always had [the

technology], so their process of work environment is completely different, because it's

been affected by technology and how that affects them, I think it plays a big factor.

Interestingly, it was also implied that this expectation of working at home is always there, even if

verbally expressed otherwise. Individuals explained reading between the lines, and even if the

management had advised them not to do work from home, it was indeed expected: "Even though

my boss said that it was not expected of me, I also felt like I had to do it because it was a part of

my job to respond to messages" (Phoebe). Therefore, it seems that some of the expectations,

perhaps due to the societal influence, are self-induced as well.

4.2.2. Fear of Consequences

Another major perspective explaining participants' habits towards working from home

was the fear of what might result from ignoring messages, not completing tasks, or from taking

time off. Ryder explained that they might "feel an obligation to their customers or their

employer, being afraid that if they don't get something done there might be consequences." This

is an important aspect to look at when looking at why young adults make the decisions they

make in regards to their work/life balance. Amanda described her need to be available as a way

to keep the management happy:

> It's like, if my boss is texting me to ask me to come in early, I feel like I need to have my
>
> phone for that. Cause if I don't check it in time, then I can't come in early and then I
>
> don't want them to be disappointed in me.

This accessibility as a way to control management's view of the individual seems to be another

unique way in which management can control their employees even after hours. This also ties in

with both an idea of wanting to feel needed, as described by Brady "these gadgets [...] give us a

feel of need in a work environment," as well as with the idea of competition brought up by several participants.

There's a feeling of pressure associated with the expectation to be available; if one isn't fast enough, someone else might take the job. When there are a lot of people competing for the attention, the pressure is on: "there's so many of us and you want the company to see us, see you" (Payten). The idea of competing over the attention was also iterated by Meredith who explained: "[If] I don't email them back right away, I'm going to lose my chance, my spot." Furthermore, participants also indicated it could potentially shed negative light on you if you're not available when someone else is. Halle described this as not being "good for you as a person, like your image at work, 'cause other employees would be answering." These answers indicate that young adults see themselves as competing for attention and their position in the company. If they aren't available at all times, they fear being seen in a negative light, or fear missing out on opportunities to shine.

4.2.3. "You're on It Anyway"

The final sub-code under the theme of expectation is this notion that participants brought up about their general technology usage. This was both presented from the perspective of their personal expectation to be using their devices, and from the perspective of the management making generalized assumptions that their employees are using the devices and therefore should be expected to respond with a quick turnaround. Here participants perceived work tasks almost as leisure, and did not consider small, quick tasks as work. This was the category that created the greatest tension. Although not a major opinion among the participants (n=4), the fact that there were multiple participants who shared the ideology stresses that the following quotes demand attention and further investigation.

First, the idea that "everyone has a phone, so definitely everyone is accessible" (Amelia) was introduced by several participants. Amanda added that "[the management] know[s] my schedule, so they know if I can or I can't [come in early]." This thinking suggests that just by not being scheduled for work, you are free to work and should be available because you own a device that makes you accessible. Checking your device or answering to emails quickly from one's phone was perceived not to be work by four individuals. One explained that since they'd already be on the device, it didn't count as work: "Especially nowadays when you can do it on your phone. Like, if you're sitting on the couch, on your phone anyway, then you'd send a quick email. I wouldn't say that's work" (Nathaniel). Similarly, Phoebe addressed the topic by explaining how it felt less like work and "more like you're communicating with people from work." Furthermore, Amelia explained that she feels "[doing emails on your phone] is just another form of, not social media, but just like a part of your phone almost." All of these examples highlight the participants personal views of the technological devices. It is just something they do.

This idea of viewing simple work tasks almost as leisure is intriguing. It could mean that the connection between the individual and their device is so strong they don't see the border between work and life. In fact, Grace found it hard to answer a question on how technology could affect the work/life balance, as she stated she doesn't "see work and life separately." This could be important in understanding the impact of technology on young adults' global identity, and through that, on their work/life balance.

4.3. Technology as Leisure

The connection one has to their device can imply how they perceive work in light of technology. Many of the participants described using technology for leisure activities, and the

ability to do so as a convenience that smartphones and tablets allow: "It could be that the little

hour, I might have an hour break between classes. And if I want to just relax and watch some

YouTube videos, I can do that pretty easily" (Nathaniel). Halle described having used her phone

to listen to music. Furthermore, the demographic surveys indicated that smart phones and tablets

are used for social media apps like *Facebook, Instagram, Twitter* and *YouTube.* The technology

and the ease of access does not come empty handed though. While it allows for relaxation, on the

other hand, participants described that with the ease of access to the applications on their

devices, they were experiencing the contrary effect of losing that relaxing time for

procrastination:

> I think procrastination is a lot easier if you have a smartphone. Because if I really don't
>
> want to do homework, I can pick up my phone and I can go on it and I can get lost on the
>
> Internet for like hours. (Amanda)

This idea of using the apps on a smartphone for leisure, but ending up unintentionally

procrastinating was crystalized in Amelia's response:

> Sometimes, you can just kind of get sucked into technology. You're just like 'oh, I'm just
>
> going to go check Snapchat. And then all of a sudden you're checking Snapchat and
>
> Twitter and Instagram and Facebook [...] Just because it's easy to go down a rabbit hole
>
> of all the technology and everything that's in a phone or your tablet that you lose track of
>
> time.

Here, the use of phones and tablets is also seen as a challenge, as it can pull one in and get them

stuck. Payten described it as "an addiction almost." If misused, the benefits of having the

smartphone and using it for leisure can be overpowered by the negatives of it.

4.3.1. Lack of Presence

Another common side effect of technology use that participants brought up when discussing the leisure use of smartphones was the distraction and the inability to be present it leaves people with. All of the challenges described by participants in regard to presence had to do with not fulfilling the presence one was supposed to be enjoying. The time outside of work was seen as time to spend with family and friends. If one is tied to their device, they miss out on the interactions with others. The challenges that were communicated were mostly focusing on individuals losing their personal or family connection due to the lack of presence. As Nancy described:

> [The mobile devices] are on your mind a lot. So I'll be doing something, and I'll be like "oh, I should check my phone." And I think it definitely takes you out of whatever moment you're in a little bit because you're distracted by whatever is going on in your phone, and you're not paying attention to what's happening in your life at that moment.

Because of the power these devices hold over people and the ways in which they suck people in, the participants end up missing out on the human interaction. This was described as an issue in both one-on-one and group settings. Grace explained her experience with her roommate:

> My roommate could be talking to me at the exact same time I'm on my phone and responding to emails or trying to solve a problem. Like really, we're having a conversation, but I am not engaged at all.

While Payten referenced a group setting:

> Literally you can go to a party and everybody has their phone on their hand, and not even a party, any gathering, even in class time. Everybody just has this like, an uncontrollable addiction where we're just all on our phones and we're aware of the problem.

The addiction to smartphones seems to be widely accepted and acknowledged issue, yet it seems to persist. The second major concern was the lack of benefitting from the opportunity to relax. "If you're using [the technological devices] incorrectly, or just like spending all your free time with your technology, you're not getting any of that life balance" (Amelia). The addiction combined with the perceived expectation could bring about an unhealthy work/life balance.

4.4. Parental Impact

Generally, the discussion on parental impact on the participants yielded a lot less data than anticipated. There was no clear distinction of a connection between parents' work/life balance and their own practices. Several of the participants described having parents who did not bring work home: "I would say my parents were pretty good at leaving stuff at work" (Nathaniel). Others, like Marlene, described having one parent who occasionally worked from home: "I would say more of it was left at work but sometimes, so my mom, my mom stays home she doesn't have an outside job, but my dad would be answering calls." Furthermore, the technological aspect of work seemed to be a lot less common in the participants' childhood memories than predicted. The smartphones and tablets were not as commonly owned and used in the participant households as anticipated. When analyzing the answers to personal ideas on work/life balance and what would be considered as working from home, there was not a clear connection between participants who preferred working from home and experiences with parents working from home as anticipated. Something interesting to look into though, was the contrast in how parents' work was perceived by the participants as children in cases that work was brought home.

Generally, participants either described having negative feelings towards the parent, or not feeling any specific way about it. Many participants seemed to be able to reflect back on the

fact that parents working from home did so because it was necessary for the financial stability of the family. The negative vs. neutral experiences are described in detail below.

4.4.1. Frustration vs. Neutral

Participants who had experience with their parents bringing work home were generally divided into two camps: to those who were negatively affected by it, and to those who expressed no implications from it. The prior who described the experience as negative explained that they could "sense [the work] because [the parent] was in kind of a crabby mood" (Amanda), or that her father being angry about work "made me angry" (Payten). Participants also described feeling sad because they had to compete for the attention they wanted. On the other side, many participants reported they were not impacted by their parents' work, but instead just felt it to be "normal" (Megan & Phoebe). Participants, both those who had been negatively impacted and those who didn't feel the impact of their parents' work communicated an understanding for their parents' behavior. It was generally explained they understood it had to be done to provide for the family. Cameron explained his experience where his dad "was a really busy guy. He was always constantly at work, which you have to be when you're raising a larger family."

However, Cameron elaborated that his father promoted the idea of "not letting work be your life." So, despite his busy working schedule, he made sure to teach his children this shouldn't be everything. Additionally, similar to participant responses when discussing their personal preferences with work/life balance, the idea that "life happens" (Marlene) was brought up. Participants generally expressed an understanding for the work interfering with home-life as it was perceived necessary for family support.

4.5. Recommendations to Improve Work/Life Balance

Participants generally discussed five methods through which someone struggling with their work/life balance could aim to improve their situation. These methods included prioritization, cutting back on tasks or hours, setting a specific time aside after hours to complete work from home, removing the convenience factor [access on the mobile device], and talking to management. These were divided into two categories: *personal recommendations* and *workplace recommendations* and are described more in detail below.

4.5.1. Personal Recommendations

Participants generally focused on giving advice that would be applicable to individuals at home. The most popular piece of advice from half of the participants (n=11) was to step back and re-evaluate one's priorities. This was described as re-evaluating what's the most important in one's life, and prioritizing one's values:

> I think it you want to be successful and want to have a certain position in the company, that means that more of your time might have to go towards your job or professional development. But if you were to want to be married with a family in five years, your values are probably going to shift a little bit to where [you] only want to put in the 40 hours a week [you're] required to. (Grace)

The alternative way of prioritizing one's life was through prioritizing what needs to be accomplished in each space (at work and in life) each day: "Prioritizing what's the most important, you should do that. Like, you do work things at work, and personal life things at home. You set your priorities for each one" (Megan). Being aware of and focusing on the life side of the equation is especially important: "if you're with your family, prioritize that time with your family rather than being on your phone checking work emails and stuff like that" (Payten).

Another way, that ties in with prioritization and keeping oneself in check was the suggestion to set and follow times when working was okay. After this time, the participants suggested one put away the work and focus on their personal life. The easiest way to do this was described as "making a schedule" (Halle), or just "setting a time" (Amelia). If one was used to working from home at any given time, Megan and Meredith acknowledged it might need to be done in little steps: "Like if [you usually] work till seven, maybe tonight [you] only work till six, and slowly change time or make a difference" (Meredith). This reflects a conscious effort in separating work and life, while still allowing them to blend a little bit under one's own terms, to ease the feelings of guilt associated with the perceived expectations. By doing this, participants indicated one is allowed to get that work done in their own time but are still getting their personal time. By setting limits to when working was acceptable, one would have an opportunity to have a break: "After this time of the day you're done, and then like between this and this time it's okay. After this time, you have to put it away" (Ryder).

The final and most concrete way, specific to what people could personally do to improve work/life balance was by removing access to work during non-work times. Participants acknowledged, that because the notifications come directly to the devices they use and have on them constantly, it was hard not to check them. This, in turn, could result in the work taking up a significant portion of time, because "it's not just the two minutes [you respond to an email], because then you get into work mode, and then it might trigger something that keeps your mind on something for half an hour" (Ryder). To counteract the tendency to bring work home, recommendations for removing the convenience were presented. The simplest form is to separate work and home devices, as Brady suggested: "get your work to pay for a phone that's just for work. And then leave it at work," If not leaving it at work, Meredith's idea was to: "turn your

45

work phone off when you get home." For those who do not have a separate phone for work tasks, the advice was similar: "Turn off your notifications and maybe set your phone down and don't pick it up for [work] things" (Megan). Phoebe explained it would be best to remove the apps that allow for working from home all together:

> Like you remove it from your convenient devices. You remove it from your phone, you remove it from your tablet, so you don't check your emails. If people text you or message you in some form, you leave them, like you can just swipe the notification and make them go away.

This advice accounted for a chance to still continue to use the device during free time, with the work- related distractions being removed from it. These strategies imply that young adults do want to separate their work and life spheres, and that they have different ways to actively counteract the expectation to work from home.

4.5.2. Workplace Recommendations

The other half of the advice young adults provided to help balance work and life relates more what management could do in the workplace. Nearly half of the participants suggested talking openly about the struggles to one's manager (n= 10), depending on the relationship one has with them. Participants brought up points about the health of the employees, and the monetary value to the company. They also discussed employees' right to have a clear work/life balance. It was generally perceived that if one discussed their struggle with the management, the situation could be fixed: "have a conversation with your management and just express your opinions and that it is something you're struggling with. Then I think they'd be willing to work with you" (Marlene). The other reason why participants expressed management to be interested in working out the situation was the monetary consequences to the business, as Viona elaborated:

"explaining that they're feeling burnt out and that they're not going to be able to perform their best because they're constantly exhausted." Grace also touched on it, explaining that no business should react to it with a 'sorry' attitude, but more so of "oh no, that's not what we want. You're working more hours; we have to pay you more." She also touched on discussing options on divvying up work between employees, which closely aligns with the concept of cutting back.

The final suggestion brought up by participants was to cut back on tasks one seeks to accomplish. Grace suggested talking to the management about divvying up tasks or adding another person on the team to help with workload. Amanda explored the option of stepping back and potentially cutting back on hours if that was an option. This cutting back was similar to prioritizing, but actually abandoning tasks that weren't deemed necessary to meeting one's goals. Brady described it as follows:

> Cut back, sit there, and think about what you're currently doing and how that will benefit you, specifically in the future. Because if you're in five things at work, and two of those will benefit you in the long run, then what are those three there for? Just cut it off. Be clear when you get the job, that it's your priority to have a healthy work/life balance.

The assertiveness was perceived as the employee right. If one puts in the work that benefits the business, they can also make decisions that benefit themselves. This is in conflict with the idea of needing to prove one's worth as an employee. However, if the tasks of all employees were divvied up better, it could reduce the competition.

4.6. Technology as Access

A major concept that was communicated in the conversations about technology was the access it provides people. This was determined to be the central code for all of the data. Although *access* yielded so much data it deserves its own section, it also connects back to all of

the other major codes. *Technology as Leisure* the access to technology and the different forms of leisure through it were the reason participants described not being present. Further, considering work/life balance or the expectations participants brought up during the interviews, *access* was again at the front and center – because of the convenience and access to the technology, participants described to be feeling the need to be available, and explained feeling guilt for missing communications from friends and management. Even in their recommendations on how to better separate work and life for those who prefer separation, the common responses included removing the convenience of access to work through the devices or removing access from home as a whole.

The discussion of the concept could be divided into four main categories: *benefits of access, app for work*, *drawbacks of access*, and *"curiosity" vs. "anxiety"*. The following section will focus on describing the different aspects of technology as access.

4.6.1. Benefits of Access

Participants widely acknowledged their communication devices (mainly smartphones) as positive assets to them. Generally, these devices were described as making communication easier, and the information collection more convenient to the user. Phoebe described this making note of the size of the device as a convenience factor:

> I think it's a lot easier to communicate with people. I would say, for convenience's sake, it's really nice to have everything in one space [...] And it's definitely super nice to have it all in one place that is super small and can just go with me everywhere.

Most of the feedback however, focused on the capabilities of the devices instead of the physical features of it. The ability to reach out to people at any time of the day in any situation was highlighted as a benefit of the devices. As Halle explained, "if I'm in a class, I can just text and

they can respond. I can know what I want without having to go out of my way." Via the device, participants didn't need a set time or place for their communication.

The positive experiences with access noted the ease of access to "any amount of information in the world, any time you want," without being "tied down to your room or your computer maybe" (Derek). Therefore, the mobility of the device was seen as a major advantage of the device. Furthermore the benefit of having different applications on the phone through which to get a hold of someone was described as helpful, as seen in Grace's summary: "there's so many ways on a device that you can talk to people," followed by Meredith's confirmation: "[...] if I need to get in touch with someone, there's so many different ways I have access to getting in touch with them." Having the means of reaching out to someone in more than one way is seen as a benefit as it allows people to fulfill their agenda more conveniently.

4.6.2. App for Work

The use of mobile device applications for work was a common experience for a majority of participants (n=15). This seems to be a new development in managements' efforts to bridge the gap between work and life through added convenience. These participants described currently using or having used an app for work purposes. While there was a variety of different apps described, for most, the app as a tool to keep track of their schedule, or to drop and pick up shifts as needed. Some described using these apps for communicating with their coworkers and management, others explained their management uses the app to post announcements to communicate important messages to their employees. With the reported levels of daily technology use (as described by participants on the anonymous demographic surveys), this approach to management seems an effective way to reach the employees. An individual in a retail job explained having a work device with access to the Internet to get access to information

and with calling abilities to allow reaching out to people in and outside of the store, and described it having "made [their] lives a lot easier" (Amanda).

While the use of these apps was generally described as making communication more convenient, it leaves a question of whether the use of these apps is good for work/life balance. As described by several participants, the apps keep notifying each user of all new posts and announcements regardless of the time of the day. Therefore, while clearly targeted towards tech-savvy young adults, and while convenient to use for communication, these apps seem to be blurring the line between work and life.

4.6.3. Drawbacks of Access

While participants generally described the accessibility of people and information as a positive effect of smartphone and tablet use, some general concerns were identified as a counterpart. These concerns were not voiced without discussing the benefits of the access, but having access was seen more as a double-edged sword. The dual effect of access to people, and them having access to you at all times, was seen as challenging:

> You're always connected. So where that's a benefit, that also makes life more difficult too, because sometimes you need to focus on something right in front of you and you can't because you've got this device there that is giving you so much access to everything in your life that sometimes it takes away from what's right in front of you. (Ryder)

Furthermore, the emotional impact of being personally available to others seemed to be overwhelming to participants, as Brady states: "always being accessible takes a toll on a person, and it's daunting." The stress of the immediacy of responses to messages was also explained to be a cause of negative emotions: "I don't like being expected to respond to things right away [...] That is something that kind of makes me anxious, if I don't know how to respond to something"

(Nathaniel). Knowing that we have a device that allows that immediate access was seen as the sole purpose of them being invented. Furthermore, even if one was busy with something, their response was requested immediately. As Grace explained: "It is so easy to communicate, that in our minds there's no reason that someone wouldn't reply to you or call you back, when in reality, we all have lives." This general ideology of always being within reach seemed to be generally accepted across the board. Another downside of having information "constantly at our fingertips" (Marlene) is that it changes people's attitude towards finding answers. The convenience was seen to make people more reluctant to work for their answers:

> I think in the workplace, I think it makes us less willing to find an answer when it comes to whether you decide to go Google it in a second or stand up and go to a section in your workplace and sit down with a book and read for three hours. I think, why do that when you can do it in a second? (Brady)

Additionally, growing accustomed to having these devices to ease their life was something participants seemed to expect to have available to them. One participant shared an example of an instance where she had to go without the device for several weeks, and how it left her feeling helpless:

> It was very hard not to have it, because I didn't realize how much usage I got out of my phone. Like, I use it for my camera, I use it for texting, I use it for calling, I use it for everything [...] If I didn't have my phone, if I didn't have the device itself, then I just can't do anything. (Phoebe)

Ultimately, the negative effects of the access the smartphones and tablets allow were focused on violation of personal time and the challenges that come with relying on it heavily.

51

4.6.4. "Curiosity" vs. "Anxiety"

The final theme that emerged in discussion focusing on the technological devices specifically, was the tension between curiosity and anxiety it provoked in people when participants see notifications popping up on their screens. Participants generally described the feelings they feel when they look for or receive notifications either being curious or anxious about it. This is an interesting divide, as curiosity is usually used to describe more positive of a feeling than anxiety. Halle was one of the participants reacting more positively to the notifications, and described her thought process for checking her phone clearly indicating not being: "nervous or anything, it's just that I want to know… [I'm] curious, like, who would text me or who would want something from me?" Ryder on the contrary explained that if he "can't check it right away, [he] start[s] getting anxious about it."

Another experience of anxiety over notifications was the commonly described experience of being overwhelmed by how many notifications they received. Wearable technologies like the Apple Watch were seen as having significant implications for work/life balance by contributing to notification anxiety. Viona described this as "feeling bombarded at times" and added that "I also have an Apple Watch. Okay. And so I just feel like I'm always connected and always checking their notifications." This idea of using an Apple Watch and having negative feelings due to the connectivity it provides was shared by three participants. Amelia described her experience being overwhelmed "[It is] especially tough to ignore people or even if you're just trying." A few exceptions (n=4) explained they check their phones and have them on them most of the time but feel neutral if they didn't have a chance to check their phones.

5. DISCUSSION

The aim of the study was to gain a deeper understanding of how young adults perceive work/life balance in light of technology. Further, it was attempted to better understand how the use of technologies and perceptions of work reflected as a part of the young adults' *global identity* (Ashforth, 2001). The study compared the data to existing findings on young adults' technology addiction and used the border and boundary theories as a reference point for work/life balance (Ashforth, Kreiner & Fugate, 2000; Clark; 2000; Clark, 2002; Mazmania, Orlikowski & Yates, 2013; Kwon et. al., 2016; Lapierre & Lewis, 2016). The interviews yielded a significant amount of data that can be used to understand how young adults perceive work, life and the balance in between. Several interesting points emerged from the data that suggest young adults have new ways in which they perceive the work/life balance in light of technology. The findings of the research are discussed in detail below. The research question is answered and the empirical evidence supporting existing research will be detailed. Further, the implications of all of the findings will be presented. Finally, limitations to the study will be discussed along with potential future directions for research.

5.1. Summary of Results

The findings confirm that participants generally think of work/life balance in terms of two spheres, personal and professional lives, but technology is bridging the gap (Ashforth, Kreiner & Fugate, 2000; Clark, 2000; Clark, 2002; Gregg, 2011; Ruppel, Gong & Tworoger, 2013; Walden, 2016). The findings also suggest that young adults are habitual users of technology, who could be described as portraying signs of addiction (Kwon et. al., 2016), and that they tend to prefer to put their own needs before the business' needs (Jirasevijinda, 2018). Some deviations, however, were found, as well as some new aspects of work that have come

53

about with technology and should be studied further. This study explored the following research question:

RQ1: *How do young adults perceive work/life boundaries in light of technology?*

In line with Clark's (2000; 2002) border theory, and Ashforth, Kreiner and Fugate's (2000) boundary management theory participants in the study referred to work life balance in terms of having time (and space, and thoughts) separated by the two spheres, work and life. These spheres were found to be largely intertwined, where the majority of participants (n=15) either described specifically having experience with bringing work home to work on with their mobile device, or co-worker or management having reached out to them via the device outside of their scheduled working hours. Participants indicated a clear, strong bond with their smartphone or tablet devices, with the vast majority of them (n=20) indicating on the demographic survey that they always had their device on them. The need to check their phone was also emphasized in the interviews. This finding was similar to Wright et. al, (2014) who found that participants who had a background of checking their phone seemed to indicate the need to check their devices for work as well. This was visible in the data through both the participants' personal tendency to check (even) the work-related notifications, as well as their idea of expectation from management for doing so.

Furthermore, in line with previous findings on use of ICT devices blurring the boundaries between work and life (Gregg, 2011; Ruppel, Gong & Tworoger, 2013; Walden, 2016), it was found participants who preferred to separate their work and life spheres viewed technology as challenging their ability to draw the line. Others enjoyed the possibilities these devices provide for integration. The findings of this study also suggest that young adults divide into two groups: those who seem highly ambitious in regard to work and those who value their own time over

54

work. The latter group supports Jirasevijinda's (2018) finding that young adults tend to put their own needs before those of their work. This was emphasized in participants' descriptions of perceived us vs. them - setting in regard to work. In this, there are 'us' (the employees) and 'them' (the management). The former, on the other hand, supports Boswell and Olson-Buchanan's (2007) argument that highly ambitious individuals tend to be more likely to work longer hours and put in extra effort.

Overall, participants seemed to view technology as both a convenience and as a challenging factor. The data suggests that while participants generally described technology as allowing better access to people and information, it also easily distracted them, sometimes for hours. Smartphones seem to be integrated into today's workplace fairly regularly, and while they allow more convenient means of communicating and organizing, they also clearly intrude on employees' personal time. Participants described methods to cope with poor work/life balance as learning to prioritize, setting specific times for work, cutting back on tasks one takes on, talking to management to express the negative consequences both on employee well-being and to the business economically, and in some cases removing access to the devices that allow working from home. These were not, however, described as common practices in their own experiences.

Participant responses in regard to balancing work and life indicate that their technology habits nonverbally communicate constant connectivity, which is in line with previous research findings (Mazmanian et al., 2013; Ter Hoeven, van Zoonen & Fonner, 2016). Although young adults expressed often working from home due to the perceived expectation to do so, the potential impact of the nonverbal communication is worth noticing. The recommendations to discuss work/life balance and challenges with management suggest young adults expect to communicate with their management, rather than bringing up]their concerns about work/life

balance at home. It is important for management to know and understand the expectations of the young adults' so that organizations know how to prepare for young their entrance into the workplace.

These findings should be reviewed to better understand how these participant experiences and perceptions of work/life balance can impact businesses economically. If participants who prefer to separate the two spheres feel like they cannot achieve their work/life balance, their mental health may suffer. In turn, the toll on mental health could impact their productivity rates, or the quality of work. Further research should be conducted to better understand how apps used for work impact young adults.

5.2. Theoretical Implications

The findings of the study suggest that ultimately, the negative effects of the access smartphones and tablets allow were focused on violation of personal time and the challenges that come with relying on it heavily. This is in line with Mazmanian, Orlikowski, and Yates' (2013) findings on work communication taking up personal time. Findings demonstrate further that for those who desire to separate their work and life spheres, the blurring of boundaries leads to weaker work/life balance. Participant perceptions of feelings of sadness and challenges with mental health resulting from 24/7 accessibility support Ter Hoeven, van Zoonen & Fonner's (2016) argument on the dual impact of communication technology; it provides resources, but also creates demands that can harm employee well-being. Further, the demands can be seen as increasing stress, because communication technology use "can lead to interruptions and unpredictable work developments" (Ter Hoeven et. al, 2016, p.242). Adding to the literature, the data suggests that participants read into verbally communicated messages and might therefore create some of the demands for themselves, contributing to their overall stress. Further, worth

discussing is that although participants acknowledged talking to management as an option to cope with work/life balance, only one participant described an experience where they would have done so.

Additionally, the findings support existing literature on the influence of personality and personal preference on perceived work/life balance and choice of integration or separation (Eby, Caspar, Lockwood, Bordeaux, & Brinley, 2005; Leka & De Alwis, 2016). This is relatable to Boswell & Olson-Buchanan's (2007) suggestion that highly ambitious individuals might find working from home more acceptable. The data suggests that young adults beginning their careers can be divided into two groups: those who enjoy the potential technology adds to integrating work and life, and those who view technology as a challenge to maintaining a clear work/life balance through separation. This could be interpreted as the individuals' intention to either include or exclude work roles as a part of their global identity (Ashforth, 2001). This is also seen in the us vs. them conceptualization of work described by participants. This idea of benefiting self vs. benefiting the business ties back to Jirasevijinda's (2018) finding that younger adults tend to put their own needs before their work. Whether this is selfish, or an act of self-care is something worth further researching.

Finally, the findings contribute to the literature through what can be learned about the impact of social learning on perceived work/life balance. As commonly known, guilt is a strong motivator (O'Keefe, 2002). Participants who socially learned that others in the organization were bringing work home, felt guilted into following the example. Another way in which social learning is visible in the data is through the participant experiences with parental working from home. Those who viewed it as a necessity for the family's financial standing could have been conditioned to their view through social learning (Bandura, 1977), as the respondents must have

57

learned somewhere, potentially from their parents, that working means making money to pay for living expenses.

5.3. Practical Implications

The findings of this study provide insight into young adults' perceptions of work/life balance in light of technology. This is useful information for organizational managers planning for the entrance of this population into the workplace. The young adults will potentially reshape the organization(s) in the long run. With the understanding that there are individual differences between young adults, managers can better meet the needs of the individuals. It is important to look at participant perceptions of working from home, to be able to communicate better and set clear expectations. If an individual perceives an imbalance between work and life, it can create health troubles, especially mental health problems, as described by participants in this study. Because a majority of the participants described feeling a need or an expectation to work from home, even if it wasn't explicitly stated, we can deduct that more effort in communicating the true expectations is needed. This would mean both verbal and non-verbal communication. Management should set an example with their own behavior, and workplace meetings should be scheduled to clearly present expectations to employees, with a chance of asking clarifying questions. This will help organizations economically, as providing a better balance between work and home can reduce burnout and costs associated with it. The specific strategies will be discussed below.

Further, the findings of the study suggest that young adults prefer to communicate directly with their management about work/life balance issues. This should be taken into consideration when employing young adults. Young adults often perceived work through an us vs. them perspective, viewing management as an entity mainly focused on the business, not the

employees, these findings can help organizations to approach the relationship between management and employees from a more communicative perspective. In addition, as seen in the data, despite verbal communication of expectations to the employees, young adults seem to look for a hidden meaning in the message and imitate others' (especially management's) actions. When told not to work from home, they still assume management secretly wants them to bring work home. Therefore, instead of assuming that employees simply rely on verbal messages, management should make sure to communicate the expectations through nonverbal messages as well. If the company expectation is not to bring work home, then management should lead by example, to clearly establish a culture that supports separating work and life spheres and leave work at work at the end of the day. This could be emphasized with verbal communication or a policy that requires devices to be checked in for the night, making sure no one feels they are expected to work from home.

Further, as participants generally recommended open communication with management as an option to cope with imbalance between work and life spheres, management should invest in developing a relationship with the young adults in the organization. In order to help develop the relationship, weekly or monthly meetings are suggested. To ensure the meetings are received well among employees, they should be made a part of the shift instead of conducting them off the clock. The communication about these meetings should also highlight the opportunity for open communication. This is another opportunity to lead by example – if employees speak up, their suggestions and concerns should be taken seriously, without negative consequences to promote an environment conducive for discussion. This could help build rapport between the management and employees, potentially reconstructing young adults' us vs. them – scheme of the workplace. Instead of employees viewing management as against them, this could encourage

more of a teamwork environment. This connection could help individuals who recommended talking to the management as a coping method actually follow their own advice, as it would feel more appropriate than opening up without the relationship.

Additionally, to help with employee fear of consequences if they miss a notification from management for replacement shifts, it would be beneficial to clearly communicate the decision-making criteria for who gets contacted and why. For example, management can create a list of people in order of seniority and let employees know that this is the order in which people will be contacted. Explicitly presenting the criteria and acknowledging that management will follow the pre-established list until a replacement is found can help reduce the anxiety associated with it.

5.4. Limitations and Future Directions

One of the limitations to this study was that the data collection did not gauge what kind of jobs the participants held and were therefore referring to. There were no direct questions about the position they held, or their job-roles. This limits the analysis as it is only assumed participants held part-time jobs, and no analysis between fields can be conducted. In the future, research should aim to specify what positions the young adults hold, and how technology is used for work in these different positions. This would allow for a better understanding of how work/life balance is communicated by those young adults who are faced with blurred boundaries on a more regular basis. Further, the constant use of ICT technologies for work should be specified as an inclusion criterion.

Moreover, to better understand the parental impact on individuals' views on working from home, a limiting criterion for having experiences with parents bringing work home should be included. If one's parents were in a job that cannot bring work home, or one's parents did not have a job (due to retirement or being a stay-at-home parent), the question about exposure to

working from home through parental example is irrelevant. Studying the impact of social learning (Bandura, 1977) on work/life balance and work and technology habits should be awarded its own study.

In the future, research should consider how the use of apps to communicate with employees outside of working hours can impact the perceived work/life balance of the individuals. These apps were intended to ease the employees' lives by allowing access to scheduling, picking up or dropping shifts, and in some instances messaging coworkers. However, they also included notifications that would buzz on each user's phone. With the understanding of addiction to smartphones, and with the knowledge of how young adults feel about checking their devices, these notifications require attention. Furthermore, another device to consider is the smart-watch. The well understood concept of addiction to smartphones and other smart devices should be looked further into as it could potentially bare a significant impact on work/life balance (Kwon et al., 2016; Veissiere & Stendel, 2018). Because of the growing popularity of smart-watches, the convenience of receiving messages on the watch could potentially impact work/life balance. In this study, three participants referred to their Apple Watches and receiving emails and messages on these devices. As these devices are relatively new, there is clearly a gap in literature in regard to their impact on individuals' ability to draw the line between work and life.

5.5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study found that young adults tend to use technology on a regular basis, and due to its convenience, often feel the obligation to complete work tasks from home. Young adults can be divided into two groups: those who prefer a clear work/life balance and those who enjoy the opportunity to combine work and life through technology. Young adults

generally communicate an 'unspoken rule' or expectation to bring work home, challenging the traditional work/life balance boundaries of keeping work at work, and home life at home. With an understanding of the potential health risks associated with a decreased work/life balance, it is important to take a closer look at the applications being used by organizations to connect with employees outside of work. For personal suggestions, young adults suggest communicating clear expectations to the management, re-evaluating one's priorities, setting times aside for working from home, and more concretely, removing the convenience from working from home, to better separate the two spheres and to manage work/life balance. On the organizational level, young adults describe looking for a relationship in which they can openly communicate with their management. This could be done via weekly/monthly meetings held during working hours. It is also suggested management clearly communicates expectations both verbally, and by leading by example to overcome misinformed perceptions of expectations of working from home. Due to limited findings on parental impact, future researchers are encouraged to look into parental impact on perceptions and attitudes on work/life balance. In addition, the influence of social learning from peers should be explored. Finally, the potential impact of smart watches on work/life balance should also be examined.

REFERENCES

Ashforth, B. E., Kreiner, G.E., & Fugate, M. (2000). All in day's work: Boundaries and micro
role transitions. *Academy of Management Review*, *25*(3), 472-491.

Ashforth, B. E., (2001). *Role tansitions in organizational life: An Identity-Based Perspective.*
Mahwah, NJ: Routledge.

Ball-Rokeach, S. J. (1998). A theory of media power and a theory of media use: Different
stories, questions, and ways of thinking. *Mass Communication & Society*, *1*(1/2), 5.

Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall,

Barak, M. (2018). Are digital natives open to change? Examining flexible thinking and resistance
to change. *Computers & Education*, *121*, 115-123.

Berkowsky, R. W. (2013). When you just cannot get away: Exploring the use of information and
communication technologies in facilitating negative work/home spillover. Information,
Communication & Society, *16*(4), 519-541.

Bort, J. (May 30, 2013). Microsoft invented a tablet a decade before Apple and totally blew it.
Business Insider. Retrieved from https://www.businessinsider.com/heres-visual-proof-of-
just-how-badly-microsoft-blew-it-with-tablets-2013-5

Boswell, W. R., & Olson-Buchanan, J. B. (2007). The use of communication technologies after
hours: The role of work attitudes and work-life conflict. *Journal of Management*, *33*(4),
592-610.

Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing grounded theory* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Clark, S. C. (2000). Work/family border theory: A new theory of work/ family balance. *Human
Relations*, *53*(6), 747-770.

Clark. S. C. (2002). Communicating across the work/home border. *Community, Work & Family*, *5*(1), 23-48.

Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2015). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Cowan, R., & Hoffman, M. F. (2007). The flexible organization: How contemporary employees construct the work/life border. *Qualitative Research Reports in Communication*, *8*(1), 37-44.

Cruz, D., & Meisenbach, R. (2018). Expanding role boundary management theory: How volunteering highlights contextually shifting strategies and collapsing work-life role boundaries. *Human Relations*, *71*(2), 182-205.

Desai, S. P., & Lele, V. (2017). Correlating internet, social networks and workplace – a case of Generation Z students. *Journal of Commerce & Management Thought*, *8*(4), 802-815.

Dimock, M. (2018, March 1). Defining generations: Where Millennials end and post-Millennials begin. Pew Research Center. Retrieved from: http://www.pewresearch.org/facttank/2018/03/01/defining-generations-where-millennials-end-and-post-millennials-begin/

Eby, L.T., Casper, W. J., Lockwood, A., Bordeaux, C., & Brinley, A. (2005). Work and family research in IO/OB: Content analysis and review of the literature (1980-2002). *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *66*(1), 124-197.

Fenner, G. H. (2004). Technology-assisted supplemental work: Construct definition and a research framework. *Human Resource Management*, *43*(2/3), 179-200.

Gibbs, G. R. (2007). *Analyzing qualitative data.* London: Sage.

Golden, A. G. (2013). The structuration of information and communication technologies: Shared organizational and family rules and resources and implication for work in a high-technology organization. *Communication Monographs*, *80*(1), 101-123.

Gregg, M. (2011). *Work's Intimacy*. Malden, MA: Polity Press.

Harrington, B., & Ladge, J. (2009). Work-life integration: Present dynamics and future directions for organizations. *Organizational Dynamics*, *38*(2), 148-157.

Hoffman, M. F., & Cowan, R. L. (2010). Be careful what you ask for: Structuration theory and work/life accommodation. *Communication Studies*, *61*(2), 205-223.

Jirasevijinda, T. (2018). Bridging the generation gap in the workplace: How I learned to stop worrying and love working with the Millennial generation. *Journal of Communication in Healthcare*, *11*(2), 83-86.

Jordan, B. (2009). Blurring boundaries: The "real" and the "virtual" in hybrid spaces. *Human Organization*, *68*(2), 181-193.

Kirschner, P. A., De Bruyckere, P. (2017). The myths of the digital native and the multitasker. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *67*, 135-142.

Kristensen, A. R., & Pedersen, M. (2017). 'I wish I could work in my spare time' Simondon and the individuation of work-life balance. *Culture and Organization*, *23*(1), 67-79.

Kreiner, G. E., Hollensbe, E. C., & Sheep, M. L. (2009). Balancing borders and bridges: Negotiating the work-home interface via boundary work tactics. *Academy of Management Journal*, *52*(4), 704-730.

Kruger, R. A., & Casey, M. A. (2000). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Kwon, H. E., So, H., Han, S. P., & Oh, W. (2016). Excessive dependence on mobile social apps: A rational addiction perspective. *Information Systems Research*, *27*(4), 919-939.

Lal, B., & Dwivedi, Y. K. (2008). Investigating homeworkers'usage of mobile phones for overcoming feelings of professional isolation. *International Journal of Mobile Communications*, *6*(4), 3-31.

Lapierre, M. A., & Lewis, M. N. (2018). Should it stay or should it go now? Smartphones and relational health. *Psychology of Popular Media Culture*, *7*(3), 384-398.

Lee, J., & Choi, Y. (2018). Informed public against false rumor in the social media era: Focusing on social media dependency. *Temeatics and Informatics*, *35*, 1071-1081.

Leonardi, P. M., Treem, J. W., & Jackson, M. H. (2010). The connectivity paradox: Using technology to both decrease and increase perceptions of distance in distributed work arrangements. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, *38*(1), 85-105.

Leka, S., & De Alwis, S. (2016). Work, life and personality: The relationship between the big five personality traits and work-life conflict. *South Asian Journal of Management*, *23*(4), 31-53.

Levinson, D. J. (1986). A conception of adult development. *American Psychologist*, *41*, 3-13.

Loveland, E. (2017). Instant generation. *The Journal of College Admission*, 34-38.

Luker, K. (2010). *Salsa dancing into the social sciences: Research in an age of info-glut.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Maruyama, T., Hopkinson, P. G., James, P. W. (2009) A multivariate analysis of work-life balance outcomes from a large-scale telework programme. *New Technology, Work & Employment*, *24*(1), 76-88.

Maxian, W. (2014). Power to the people? Emotional components of media power, mobile ICTs, and their potential to alter individual-media dependency relations. *Mass Communication and Society*, *17*, 274-298.

Maxwell, J. A. (2013). *Qualitative Research Design: An interactive approach.* (3rd ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Maxwell, G. A., & McDougall, M. (2004). Work-life balance: Exploring the connections between levels of influence in the UK public sector. *Public Management Review*, *6*, 377-393.

Mazmanian, M., Orlikowski, W. J., & Yates, JoAnne. (2013). The autonomy paradox: The implications of mobile email devices for knowledge professionals. *Organization Science*, *24*(5), 1337-1357

Myers, K. K., & Sadaghiani, K. (2010). Millennials in the workplace: A communication perspective on Millennials' Organizational Relationships and Performance. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, *25*(2), 225-238.

Myers, M. D., & Sundaram, D. (2012). Digital natives: Rise of the social networking generation. *University of Auckland Business Review*, *15*(1), 28-37.

Palvia, P. C., & Brown, W. S. (2015). Are mobile devices threatening your work-life balance? *International Journal of Mobile Communications*, *13*(3), 317-338.

Phillips, C. (November 20, 2014). How smartphones revolutionized society in less than a decade. Government Technology. Retrieved from: http://www.govtech.com/products/How-Smartphones-Revolutionized-Society-in-Less-than-a-Decade.html

Ruppel, C. P., Gong, B., & Tworoger, L.C. (2013). Using communication choices as a boundary-management strategy: How choices of communication media affect the work/life balance

of teleworkers in a global virtual team. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*, *27*(4), 436-471.

Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers.* (3rd Ed.). London: Sage.

Schultz, N. J., Hoffman, M. F., Fredman, A. J., & Bainbridge, A. L. (2012). The work and life of young professionals: Rationale and strategy for balance. *Qualitative Research Reports in Communication*, *13*(1), 44-52.

Schumate, M., & Fulk, J. (2004). Boundaries and role conflict when work and family are colocated: A communication network and symbolic interaction approach. *Human Relations*, *57*(1), 55-74.

Super, D. E., Crites, J. O., Hummel, R. C., Moser, H. P., Overstreet, P. L., & Warnath, C. F. (1957). *Vocational development: A framework for research.* New York: Teachers College, Columbia University.

Sriwilai, K., & Charoensukmongkol, P. (2016). Face it, don't Facebook it: impacts of social media addiction on mindfulness, coping strategies and the consequence on emotional exhaustion. *Stress and Health*, *32*(4), 427-434.

Ter Hoeven, C. L., van Zoonen, W., & Fonner, K. L. (2016). The practical paradox of technology: The influence of communication technology use on employee burnout and engagement. *Communication Monographs*, *83*(2), 239-263.

ter Hoeven, C. L., Miller, V. D., Peper, B., & den Dulk, L. (2017). "The work must go on": The role of employee and managerial communication in the use of work-life policies. *Management Communication Quarterly*, *31*(2), 194-229.

Tremblay, D.-G., & Genin, É. (2008). Permeability between work and non-work: The case of self-employed IT workers. *Canadian Journal of Communication*, *33*, 701-720.

Turner, A. (2015). Generation Z: Technology and social interest. *The Journal of Individual Psychology*, *71*(2), 103-113.

Veissiere, S. P. L., Stendel, M. (2018). Hypernatural monitoring: A social rehearsal account of smartphone addiction. *Hypothesis and Theory*, *9*, (141). 1-10.

Walden. J. A. (2016). Integrating social media into the workplace: A study of shifting technology use repertoires. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, *60*(2), 347-363.

Wepfer, A. G., Allen, T. D., Brauchill, R., Jenny Gregor, J., & Bauer, Gregor, F. (2018).Work life boundaries and well-being: Does work-to-life integration impair well-being through lack of recovery? *Journal of Business Psychology*, *33*, 727-740.

Wright, K. B., Abendschein, B., Wombacher, K., O'Connor, M., Hoffman M., Dempsey, M., … Shelton, A. (2014). Work related communication technology use outside of regular work hours and work life conflict: The influence of communication technologies on perceived work life conflict, burnout, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions. *Management Communication Quarterly*, *28*(4), 507-530.

Zaleznik, A. (1989). *The managerial mystique: Restoring leadership in business.* New York: Harper & Row.

Zickuhr, K. (February 3, 2011). Generations and their gadgets. Pew Research Center. Retrieved from: http://www.pewinternet.org/2011/02/03/generations-and-their-gadgets

APPENDIX A. DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

Please circle or fill in your answers.
Please indicate your gender:

Male

Female

Other:_____

Please indicate your ethnicity:

White/ Caucasian

African-American

Hispanic

Native-American

Asian

Pacific-Islander

Other:_____

How old are you? _____

Please indicate your field of study :

1. By participating, you have indicated you own a smartphone or a tablet. Please share which one of these you use on a daily basis.

2. How often do you use the device you selected for this study?

    a. How often do you have it on you, even if not in use?

    b. How long have you been using the device(s) you mentioned earlier?

3. What do you do on your device? Facebook? Email?

APPENDIX B. FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

Thank you so much for participating in this focus group today. My name is Sara Juntunen, and I will be your facilitator today. As all of you already know, this is a thesis study, and I am looking at how work is viewed in light of technology. I am also looking at the example your parents set for you with their work and technology habits. Before we get started with the questions and talking points I have for you today, let's take a minute to go over the informed consent. If you could please read and sign this – again, your participation is absolutely voluntary, and I want to remind you that you may withdraw your participation at any time, without any consequences. Please also notice, that anything that is discussed here today, should remain within these walls.

Last thing I want to make sure to clarify to you is my role: as a facilitator, I will help guide the conversation, but for the most part, I won't be participating. Instead, I want to hear what you have to say. Olivia will be taking notes, so please don't be alarmed if you here her typing.

Okay, so let's get started with some general questions about your technology use…

1. Many students report feeling the need to constantly check their phone for notifications. How does that compare to your experience?
2. How do you manage having friends from different areas of lige in the same social media space? In what ways fo smart phones and tablets make life better? How about more difficult?

Okay, I would like to move towards talking about technology in relation to work..

3. How do you use technology for work?
4. How do you feel about the idea of bringing work home?
5. How would you define work/life balance?
   a. How do you see technology affecting this?
   b. Could you tellk me more about that?

Now let's talk about the person or people who raised you…
6. What kind of electronic/ communication were used at your household when you were growing up? What were they used for?

Some people tend to bring work home, and some leave work at work…

7. What tended to happen in your household?
8. In your opinion, what would count as doing work from home?
   a. email?
9. How would you feel if you had to miss something important to you because you had to focus on a work task?
10. What advice would you give someone who is struggling with their work/life balance?

That summarizes everything we had for your today. Does anyone have any questions? Any final thoughts? Thank you for taking the time to participate today, and please remember if you have any questions, you can reach out at any time.

APPENDIX C. INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Thank you so much for agreeing to do this interview today. My name is Sara Juntunen, and as you already know, this is a thesis study, and I am looking at how work is viewed in light of technology. I am also looking at the example your parents or your guardian set for you with their work and technology habits. Before we get started with the questions and talking points I have for you today, let's take a minute to go over the informed consent. If you could please read and sign this – again, your participation is absolutely voluntary, and I want to remind you that you may withdraw your participation at any time, without any consequences.
Okay, so let's get started with some general questions about your technology use…

1. Many students report feeling the need to constantly check their phone for notifications. How does that compare to your experience?
2. How do you manage having friends from different areas of life in the same social media space?

In what ways do smartphones and tablets make life better? How about more difficult?

(In the past, participants have mentioned the concept of access. How does that compare to your experience?)

Okay, I would like to move towards talking about technology in relation to work..

3. How do you use technology for work?
4. How do you feel about the idea of bringing work home?
5. How would you define work/life balance?
    a. How do you see technology affecting this?
    b. Could you tell me more about that?

Now let's talk about the person or people who raised you…

6. What kind of electronic/ communication devices were used in your household when you were growing up? What were they used for?

Some people tend to bring work home, and some leave work at work…

7. What tended to happen in your household?
    a. (if work was brought home) how did that make you feel?
8. In your opinion, what would count as doing work from home?
    a. Email?
    (Other participants have brought up training – how would this compare in your experience?)
9. How would you feel if you had to miss something important to you because you had to focus on a work task?
10. What advice would you give someone who is struggling with their work/life balance?"

That summarizes everything I had for your today. Do you have any questions? Any final thoughts?
Thank you for taking the time to participate today, and please remember if you have any questions, you can reach out at any time.

APPENDIX D. PARTICIPANT PSEUDONYMS AND INTERVIEW LENGTHS

Focus Group – Approximately 50 minutes

Bryan
Layla
Jordan
Daryl
Ian

Semi-Structured Interviews

Halle – 30:05
Marlene – 22:17
Viona – 28:46
Nathaniel – 35:29
Ryder – 24:15
Payten – 41:56
Amelia – 30:57
Brady – 32:15
Nancy – 26:27
Derek – 22:58
Amanda – 28:37
Grace – 36:27
Megan – 30:21
Meredith –24:49
Phoebe –38:31
Frida – 26:59
Cameron –24:25