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Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Beulah L. Williams

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Review Committee
Dr. Karla Phlypo, Committee Chairperson,
Applied Management and Decision Sciences Faculty

Dr. Barbara Turner, Committee Member,
Applied Management and Decision Sciences Faculty

Dr. David Gould, University Reviewer
Applied Management and Decision Sciences Faculty

Chief Academic Officer
Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University
2019

Abstract

Impact of Work-Related Electronic Communications Behavior Outside of Normal Working Hours

by

Beulah L. Williams

MA, Webster University, 1999

BS, The University of the State of New York, 1996

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Applied Management and Decision Sciences

Walden University

May 2019

Abstract

Employers’ reliance on asynchronous electronic communications, connective technology devices, and remote work arrangements has led employees to feel preoccupied with staying connected after-hours to be responsive to work-related demands. The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the lived experiences of professional workers who coped with constant pressure to monitor and immediately respond to work-related electronic communications during nonwork hours. The conceptual framework was supported by boundary and border theory and the constructs of work-life balance, flexible work arrangements, information and communication technology. Data were collected using semistructured interviews with 16 professional workers near Washington, DC. Moustakas’s modified van Kaam method was used to analyze, code, and organize data. Six themes emerged: mobilize or immobilize, manage expectations, safeguard personal time, work-life fusion, work engagement, and psychological outcomes. Findings revealed that professional workers felt a sense of urgency to reply to work-related e-mails and text messages outside of their regularly scheduled work hours and felt a sense of professional obligation to be available after-hours. Results may be used to shape and support positive social change through effective organizational change programs for technology-related work-life imbalances, thereby benefiting employers and employees.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my husband, family, and friends. Each of you encouraged me through the many years of my journey. I completed this degree to be an inspiration to all of you. You can do it; continue to reach higher! To my mother, Avell, known to us as “Baby.” I know I got my love for education from you. As much as you read, research, and analyze, I grant you an honorary doctorate. To my children, Tameka and Dameon. I hope I have inspired you to continue reaching for your goals and that you encourage Christin and Diamond to achieve academic success. To my brother and sisters, Pensul, Thelma, and Phyllis. I have been away from all of you for nearly 33 years. These last few years, I was not able to be home as much as I would have liked. Thank you for sending the many pictures and for electronically connecting me into the lives of all of my nieces and nephews through live video chat. To my family friends, Jackie and Freda. Thank you for the phone calls and for keeping me linked-in over the years. To my church family, thank you for your support and for being a prayer warrior.

To my “everything” husband, Fred007. Thank you for being patient and understanding, especially these last two years while I worked to complete this milestone. Thank you for keeping everything up and running: the Internet connection, the modem, the Wi-Fi, the computers, paper in the printer, the fax machine, the exercise equipment, the meals, the laundry, and for holding me up. Thank you for helping me work through my daily pain. It was tough; still you encouraged me to keep going. Thank you for keeping me motivated and for keeping me laughing. You are the best! I love you, Honey.

To everyone, I finished my homework! I can go outside now!

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Table of Contents

List of Tables vi

List of Figures vii

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study 1

  Background of the Study 2

  Problem Statement 4

  Purpose of the Study 5

  Research Questions 6

  Conceptual Framework 6

  Nature of the Study 8

  Definitions 9

  Assumptions 11

  Scope and Delimitations 12

  Limitations 12

  Significance of the Study 14

    Significance to Practice 14

    Significance to Theory 15

    Significance to Social Change 15

  Summary and Transition 16

Chapter 2: Literature Review 17

  Literature Search Strategy 17

  Conceptual Framework 19

    Transcendental Phenomenological Research Design 20
    Noema and Noesis 21
  Literature Review...22
    Primary Research Studies Providing the Foundation for this Study.................... 23
  Work-Life Balance...29
    Defining Work-Life Balance 29
    Historical Background of Work-Life Balance 31
    Current Studies of Work-Life Balance 34
  Domain and Role Characteristics..39
    Boundary Theory 40
    Border Theory 43
    Spillover Theory 46
  Flexible Work Arrangements...49
  Information and Communication Technology...55
    Psychological Implications 56
    Technostress.. 58
    Workplace Telepressure... 59
    Psychological Availability and Well-Being... 65
  Synthesis of the Literature 67
  Summary and Conclusions 70
Chapter 3: Research Method..73
  Research Design and Rationale 74

Role of the Researcher 76

Methodology 77

  Participant Selection Logic 78

  Instrumentation 80

  Pilot Study 82

  Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection 83

  Data Analysis Plan 86

Issues of Trustworthiness 89

  Credibility 89

  Transferability 90

  Dependability 91

  Confirmability 91

  Ethical Procedures 92

Summary 94

Chapter 4: Results 95

Pilot Study 95

Research Setting 97

Demographics 97

Data Collection 100

Data Analysis 102

  Step 1: Horizonalization: Listing and Preliminary Grouping 102

  Step 2: Reduction and Elimination 103

Step 3: Clustering and Thematizing 103

Step 4: Validation 104

Step 5: Textural Description 104

Step 6: Structural Description 104

Step 7: Textural-Structural Description 104

Epoché or Bracketing 106

Data Analysis Software and Coding 107

Evidence of Trustworthiness 108

Credibility 108

Transferability 110

Dependability 111

Confirmability 111

Field Notes and Accompanying Researcher's Reflexivity 112

Study Results 115

Theme 1: Technology: Mobilize or Immobilize 117

Theme 2: Safeguarding Personal Time 118

Theme 3: Work-Life Fusion 120

Theme 4: Managing Expectations 122

Theme 5: Work Engagement 124

Theme 6: Psychological Outcomes 125

Discrepant Case Data 127

Summary 128

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations 130

Interpretation of Findings 130

Comparison of Findings to Conceptual Framework and Theories 133

Limitations of the Study 136

Recommendations 137

Implications 140

Positive Social Change 140

Methodological Implications 141

Theoretical Implications 143

Practical Implications 144

Conclusions 146

References 148

Appendix A: Interview Protocol 176

Appendix B: Pilot Study Invitation Letter 179

Appendix C: Recruitment Flyer 181

Appendix D: Client Nondisclosure Agreement 182

Appendix E: National Institutes of Health Certification 184

Appendix F: Demographic Data Sheet 185

List of Tables

Table 1. Participants Demographic Overview…………………………………..99

Table 2. Alignment of Themes to Conceptual Framework of the Study……......115

List of Figures

Figure 1. Conceptual framework 20

Figure 2. Organization of the literature...28

Figure 3. Boundary management constructs, definitions, and examples..................40

Figure 4. Research process flow 78

Figure 5. Moustakas' modified van Kaam method...88

Figure 6. Word cloud of participants' frequently used words……………………..108

Figure 7. Formulation of themes based on invariant constituents.………………...115

Figure 8. Thematic portrayals to interview questions……………………………..116

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Professional workers regularly take job-related work into their nonwork domains while in a nonpaid status (Senarathne Tennakoon, da Silveira, & Taras, 2013). The expectation for professional workers to respond to employers beyond their scheduled work time and work at anytime using technology-mediated devices (Mazmanian, Orlikowski, & Yates, 2013) has caused workers to struggle for work-life balance (Mellner, 2016). Understanding the lived experiences of professional workers may be an essential element in designing effective organizational change programs for those coping with constant pressure to monitor and respond to electronic communications in an immediate way during nonwork hours (Mellner, 2016; Wright et al., 2014).

Literature revealed how informed professionals managed mobile technology for work projects and the effects of using mobile technology to make their own decisions to normalize factors affecting the location, timing, and performance of work (Mazmanian et al., 2013). Mazmanian et al. (2013) noted that professionals who used electronic communications to manage their work lives consented to the normalcy of constant contact and the ease of access that led to unintended consequences. The implication for positive social change may lie in the potential to design effective organizational change programs for technology-related work-life imbalances (Mellner, 2016; Wright et al., 2014). The need for this study existed because prior research had not addressed the influence of information and communication technology use on work-life imbalances, especially how technology-related work-life imbalances may affect associated outcomes such as employee well-being, stress, and psychological availability (e.g. physical, cognitive, and psychological belief to cope at work) for working professionals (Russo, Shteigman, & Carmeli, 2016; Wright et al., 2014). The findings from the current study may have social implications that benefit professional workers and employees in general in attaining greater balance in work and nonwork domains and developing an awareness of their psychological availability and well-being (Russo et al., 2016).

Chapter 1 contains the problem statement and purpose statement, the background of the study, and the research questions that guided the study. Chapter 1 also includes the conceptual framework, nature of the study, and significance of the study. The remaining sections of the chapter include the definitions, assumptions, scope, and limitations. Chapter 1 concludes with a summary and transition to a review of the literature in Chapter 2.

Background of the Study

Several researchers (Smetaniuk, 2013; Wright et al., 2014; Xie, Ma, Zhou, & Tang, 2018) posited that balancing work and nonwork domains has become increasingly difficult with the advent of information and communication technologies (e.g., laptop computers, tablets, and smartphones) and the demographical formation (e.g. age ranges and gender, and marital status) of the work environment. Technological advances in mobile technologies have produced devices that can provide some of the same uses as a computer, making the choice for which device to carry insignificant (Adkins & Premeaux, 2014; Boswell, Olson-Buchanan, Butts, & Becker, 2016). Electronic communications (e.g., e-mail, text messaging, and instant messaging) and the ability to be online have not only changed the manner in which work gets done but have also blurred the lines between work and personal life (Derks, van Duin, Tims, & Bakker, 2015; Hislop, Bosch-Sijtsema, & Zimmermann, 2013). Wright et al. (2014) asserted that as employees started to use communication devices for duties related to work during hours they were off the clock, being online at all times contributed to an increase in work-life imbalances as well as related outcomes including well-being, stress, and psychological availability (Wright et al., 2014). A fundamental difference was employees were connected to the office long after they left work and on days that they were not scheduled to work (Kossek, 2016; Williams, Long, & Morey, 2014). Employees were signing back on to work or never signing out to look at electronic communications and replying after work hours, and location restrictions of the conventional office have led to a phenomenon that has caused employees to stay online at all times (Kossek, 2016; Mazmanian et al., 2013; Thomas, 2014).

Before mobile connective devices were developed, employees did not have the technology affordances as employees do today (Hislop et al., 2013). Employees achieved connectivity to the workplace through a desktop computer, accessing organizational work products in traditional work settings (Cousins & Robey, 2015). Employees identified as teleworkers or telecommuters performed work activities remotely using information and communication technologies to maintain the employee/employer relationship (Alizadeh & Sipe, 2013; Allen, Golden, & Shockley, 2015). In the past decade, research on electronic communication use during nonwork time has evolved along with the advances of information and communication technologies (Chesley, Siibak, & Wajcman, 2013; Haeger & Lingman, 2014; Russo et al., 2016).

Researchers want to know why some employees stay connected to the workplace outside of normal working hours (Boswell et al., 2016; Butts, Becker, & Boswell, 2015). Organizations' increasing expectations regarding availability suggest that employees feel compelled to immediately respond to electronic communications during leisure time (Derks & Bakker, 2014; Kossek, 2016). Based on the gap in research, a need existed to conduct a qualitative transcendental phenomenological study to explore the lived experiences of professional workers who felt compelled to monitor and respond to electronic communications in an immediate way during their nonwork hours (Boswell et al., 2016; Butts et al., 2015; Wright et al., 2014).

Problem Statement

The current electronic communications culture has led to blurred boundaries in working hours (Boswell et al., 2016; Kossek, 2016; Wright et al., 2014). Constant contact has disrupted the work-life balance (Williams et al., 2014). Due to the creation of and access to mobile devices and the Internet, people do not need to be home or physically in their offices on the computer to conduct their business activities (Smetaniuk, 2013). Interacting beyond normal work hours for work-related purposes is not uncommon for employees who work with electronic communication (Mazmanian et al., 2013), which causes them to stay online at all times (Kossek, 2016).

Because research on electronic communication and the balance of work and personal time is in its early stages, many gaps in knowledge remain regarding after-hours availability (Boswell et al., 2016; Butts et al., 2015; Hislop et al., 2013). The general problem was a need to understand the lived experiences of professional workers near

Washington, DC who cope with the pressure of constant electronic communications during nonwork hours for work-related purposes. Some researchers emphasized that knowing people’s engagement in their work is an essential element in designing effective organizational change programs (Mellner, 2016; Wright et al., 2014). The specific problem was a need to understand the lived experiences on the effectiveness of professional workers near Washington, DC who cope with constant pressure to monitor and immediately respond to electronic communications during nonwork hours for work-related purposes (Mellner, 2016; Wright et al., 2014). Findings from the current study may provide organizations with a better understanding of the deleterious effects of after-hours electronic communications on employee well-being (see Ninaus, Diehl, Terlutter, Chan, & Huang, 2015).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to explore and describe the lived experiences of professional workers near Washington, DC who coped with constant pressure to monitor and respond to electronic communications in an immediate way during nonwork hours for work-related purposes. Electronic communications that employees engage in during work hours have crossed the line into nonwork hours (Mazmanian et al., 2013). The intent of the current study was to understand how professional workers near Washington, DC coped with work-related electronic communications use after-hours (see Mellner, 2016; Wright et al., 2014).

Participants included professional workers who currently work or had previously worked near Washington, DC within the past 5 years. The sample selection strategy was a combination of purposive and snowball. The goal was to interview 15-20 professional workers or until data saturation occurred (see O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). The sample of professional workers included those who experienced the phenomenon of after-hours availability by signing back on to work or never signing off and who felt compelled to be connected for other reasons during nonwork hours.

Research Questions

The goal of this study was to determine how the use of work-related electronic communications behavior after normal working hours affected professional workers. The following research questions (RQs) guided this study:

RQ1: What are the lived experiences of professional workers with constant pressure to monitor and immediately respond to electronic communications after-hours for work-related purposes?

RQ2: How does after-hours availability affect work-life balance?

Conceptual Framework

According to Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014), a study's conceptual framework and research questions must have a well-defined relationship. The conceptual framework for the current study offered a way to describe the balance of work and nonwork domains through the lens of boundary and border theory. Nippert-Eng (1996) conceptualized boundary theory and asserted that there was a difference in people when it came to the degree that their home and work roles doubled as either segmented or integrated. Segmented roles are when people keep their work and nonwork time inaccessible to one another. Integrated roles refer to people blurring their work and nonwork domains. Some researchers argued that although work and nonwork domains are not completely independent, they have boundaries (Bish, Kenny, & Nay, 2014; Hayman & Rasmussen, 2013). Kossek (2016) depicted that controlling boundaries could be psychological, which is a subjective interpretation of perceived control over one's boundary environment. Changing perceptions and behaviors is crucial for personnel in positions of authority and those who work excessive hours and have that same expectancy of others (Waller & Ragsdell, 2012). Boundary and border theory addresses permeability, flexibility, and boundary management preferences (Matthews, Winkel, & Wayne, 2014) and provided an opportunity to address the psychological availability and well-being behavioral aspects of work and nonwork domains. Chapter 2 includes a more detailed examination of the boundary and border theories.

Many researchers (Derks & Bakker, 2014; Hislop et al., 2013; Williams et al., 2014) reported that with the effect of rapid innovations and easy access to information and communication technologies, more employees across all fields of work are able and sometimes obligated to address work issues anytime, anyplace. The use of information and communication technologies anytime, anyplace made it difficult to determine a teleworker from a typical worker in the office when the employee had either a computer-mediated device or online access (Allen et al., 2015). Given the implications of the associated outcomes such as employee well-being, stress, and psychological availability for working professionals, there is a need for continued research. Continued research could increase understanding of the positive and negative consequences of technology-related work-life imbalances on professional workers whjo feel compelled to respond to electronic communications immediately during their nonwork hours (Derks, van Mierlo, & Schmitz, 2014; Kossek, Valcour, & Lirio, 2014; Wright et al., 2014).

Nature of the Study

The nature of this study was qualitative with a transcendental phenomenological design. Most types of phenomenology have influences from the work of Husserl (Chan, Fung, & Chien, 2013; Giorgi, 2014). Giorgi (2014) and Moustakas (1994) considered Husserl to be the originator of phenomenological philosophy. Husserl's work informed descriptive phenomenological methodologies, which are used to describe the essence of experiences (Husserl, 1973, 2001, 2012). Giorgi (2014) detailed modifications he made to Husserl's phenomenological methodology. Giorgi's method created a transcendental phenomenological approach and provided meticulous guidelines to advance a phenomenological science.

Husserl (1913) identified principles that inspired transcendental phenomenology that Moustakas (1994) translated into a qualitative method. The aim of the qualitative transcendental phenomenological design approach is to outline procedures for organizing and analyzing data about lived experiences defined by Moustakas (1994). The modified van Kaam method includes data analysis steps in contrast to the modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method, both described by Moustakas. The modified van Kaam method supported reporting on the phenomenon (noema) of lived experiences of professional workers near Washington, DC and making meaning (noesis) of their experiences (see Moustakas, 1994). The 7-step modified van Kaam method begins with listing every participant's expression relevant to the experience and ends by forming the basis for the composite description of the meanings and essences of the experience, which serves as a representation to the whole (Moustakas, 1994).

Definitions

The following terms are working definitions that are related to this research study:

Border theory: Refers to the specific work and family domains and expands on the boundary theory to include actual boundaries such as time and physical location (Clark, 2000).

Boundary theory: Describes how individuals create separation between work and nonwork to attain and or maintain balance (Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000). Boundary theory also addresses role categories from an internal or mental state, and border theory broadens the consideration of these boundaries to include the physical space (Piszczek & Berg, 2014).

Electronic communication: Refers to e-mail, instant messaging, text message via cell phones, and social media networks (Boswell et al., 2016).

Flexible work arrangement: Any work that is not standard in that the work arrangement is different from the usual 8 hours, 5 days a week in an office and includes a compressed work week, part-time work, and telework (Higgins, Duxbury, & Julien, 2014).

Information and communication technology: Refers to the use of mobile technologies such as laptop computers, tablets, and smartphones to complete work during nonwork hours (Arlinghaus & Nachreiner, 2014).

Lived experience: This experience includes conscious perceptions, feelings, thoughts, and behavior that a person engages in during his or her daily life. The person usually does not think about these perceptions, feelings, thoughts, and behaviors (Moustakas, 1994).

Professional workers: Refers to a group of top professional civilian government employees holding advanced degrees (Uhlmann, Heaphy, Ashford, Zhu, & Sanchez-Burks, 2013) who demonstrate characteristics such as autonomy and abstract specialized knowledge (Anteby, Chan, & Dibenigno, 2016; George, 2015).

Smartphone: The smartphone is a mobile phone that not only functions for telephone calls and text messaging, but also provides users access to mobile e-mail, Internet, calendar, and camera functionality (Hislop et al., 2013).

Spillover: Described as an indication that moods, stress, and thoughts are generated in one role domain and often influence or spill over into other domains (Ashforth et al., 2000; Chen, Powell, & Greenhaus, 2009).

Technostress: Described as a modern disease caused by the inability to cope or deal with information and communication technologies in a healthy manner (Brod, 1984).

Telework, teleworking, and telecommuting: These terms are used interchangeably and refer to a work arrangement in which employees who work from home or other locations communicate with coworkers, customers, and managers via computer and other information and communication technologies (Groenesteijn et al., 2014).

Work-life balance: Several definitions exist for work-life balance. Hayman and Rasmussen (2013) defined work-life balance as the degree to which a person finds symmetry among familial, social, personal, and employment obligations. The extent to which an individual deals with competing demands on his or her time from different domains is how Greenhaus and Ten Brummelhuis (2013) defined work-life balance. Nam's (2014) definition is engaged in and equally satisfied with personal life, the demands of nonwork, and the demands of work, and the capacity to balance work and personal life.

Workplace telepressure: Represents the preoccupation and urge to immediately respond to work-related information and communication technology messages (Barber & Santuzzi, 2015).

Assumptions

Berger (2015) posited that assumptions are impossible to ignore and recommended describing assumptions to the best of a researcher's ability. The first assumption in the current study was that participants answered questions honestly. The second assumption was that participants were representative of the population sample and had worked within the last 5 years or were working as professional workers near Washington, DC. The third assumption was that participants articulated strategies they used to manage their work and nonwork domains. The final assumption was that professional workers had direct knowledge about the phenomenon of constant pressure to observe and instantly respond to electronic communications during nonwork hours and after-hours for work-related purposes. Participants lived experiences provided the basis of the data for this phenomenological study; assumptions were required to carry out this study (see Simon & Goes, 2013).

Scope and Delimitations

Simon and Goes (2013) described delimitations as boundaries of a study. The purpose of this study was to understand the lived experiences of professional workers who coped with monitoring and responding to work-related e-mails and text messages in an immediate way during nonwork hours. This qualitative transcendental phenomenological study centered on professional workers recruited using purposive sampling and recommendations for additional qualified volunteers from selected participants. The findings of this study may contribute to the process of managing how employees work anywhere, anytime (see Mazmanian et al., 2013) and to constructing lines of demarcation between work and nonwork domains (see Duxbury, Higgins, Smart, & Stevenson, 2014).

A delimitation of this study was no fewer than 15 individuals who were professional workers. Another delimitation of the study was that the focus was on the collective experiences of professional workers. I did not include in this study professional workers who were not affiliated to the Washington, DC area. Although the results of this study addressed experiences of professional workers in the DC area, the results may be transferable (see Miles et al., 2014) to other employees and employers who want to create a work-life balance.

Limitations

Divulging the limitations of a study increases credibility with the readers of the research (Simon & Goes, 2013). This study’s limitations included the sample size, geographic area where the study took place, and population. A larger sample size spread over a larger geographic area might have yielded different results (see Miles et al., 2014). Vagle (2014) proposed limiting the sample for data collection to participants who had experienced difficulty balancing work and nonwork domains. The intent was not to collect data from the private sector, but to collect data from professional workers near Washington, DC. The use of purposive sampling for data collection may have restricted applying conclusions to the population (see Adler & Clark, 2014). The intent was not to consider the effects of demographic variables such as age, gender, disabilities, or race. Each demographic segment may have significant variations. The results may vary because of the overrepresentation of one demographic segment versus another.

There was not a preferred set of steps for a qualitative transcendental phenomenological design for data collection and analysis. Choosing the modified van Kaam method meant the focus was on the words the participants used to describe their experiences, followed by an interpretation of the meaning of those experiences. In a phenomenological study, personal biases and prior knowledge of a researcher may influence data gathering and data analysis (O'Halloran, Littlewood, Richardson, Tod, & Nesti, 2016). Moustakas (1994) identified procedures that included the bracketing of a researcher's experiences. Bracketing limits the assumptions, values, interests, emotions, and theories of the researcher, which are collectively referred to as preconceptions (Chan et al., 2013; Overgaard, 2015). I addressed these limitations by triangulating data from various sources and comparing findings to inform a complete representation of the phenomenon.

Significance of the Study

Significance to Practice

Miles et al. (2014) postulated that it is imperative to understand the significance of a study, the how and why, to conduct a successful research project. The significance of the current study was that it added to the body of knowledge regarding professional workers who manage continuous pressure to monitor and immediately respond to electronic communications at all times for work-related purposes. Results of this study have implications for researchers studying work-life balance through the lens of boundary and border theory and the role that information and communication technologies play. The results may help in understanding ways that electronic communications contribute to boundary permeation, with implications for researchers and employees interested in work-life balance and organizational electronic communications policies during nonwork hours.

In addition to aiding the understanding of future researchers, there were two possible outcomes of this study. The study may be significant in raising awareness of the effects of automated messaging on employee working practices and work-life boundaries. Another possible outcome of this study is it may offer information organizations can use to understand employee perceptions of work-life balance and professional workers who cope with work-related information and communication technology issues. Kok, Gurabardhi, Gottlieb, and Zijlstra (2015) argued that organizations play an important role in creating new legitimate beliefs. Findings from the current study may provide insights into the implementation of how leisure norms promote employees' boundary control

(Mellner, 2016). The findings of this study could have significance to a wide-range of disciplines and practices including management, leadership, and organizational change professions.

Significance to Theory

Findings might influence organizations to foster separation of work and nonwork domains that may enable employees to effectively manage a healthy work-life balance (see Russo et al., 2016). The contributions of this study might advance knowledge in the management discipline by providing a basis of understanding that fosters continuous change to aid employers in a manner that promotes positive social change. Research indicated that the use of information and communication technologies to stay connected to the workplace outside of normal work hours might promote employee imbalances in work and nonwork domains, generally leading to negative consequences (Boswell et al., 2016; Derks et al., 2015). Elements of electronic communications behavior may have a deleterious effect on employees' performance (Boswell et al., 2016).

Significance to Social Change

Ramarajan and Reid (2013) claimed that the perceptions and beliefs of people are powerful in how they tell their story. Successful management initiatives may result from the stories developed by employees to help employers and others understand their experiences. The results of the current study might provide a basis for understanding the positive and negative effects of work-related electronic communications behavior outside of normal working hours that fosters continuous change to aid employers in a manner that promotes positive social change. A question for further consideration is how societal and organizational norms will shape organizational practices regarding employees’ personal life and professional life by continuing to blur the lines between work and nonwork domains if organizations feel less pressure to conform to changing norms (Xie et al., 2018).

Summary and Transition

Chapter 1 included a discussion of issues that affected professional workers as they faced balancing work and nonwork domains. Researchers found that seeking methods to manage the two domains simultaneously was problematic (Butts et al., 2015; Derks et al., 2015). Chapter 2 includes a detailed review of relevant literature on work and nonwork domains to facilitate a balance between them.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the lived experiences of professional workers who coped with constant pressure to monitor and respond to electronic communications in an immediate way during nonwork hours for work-related purposes (see Mellner, 2016; Wright et al., 2014). Research findings suggested that bosses should be clear about their expectations regarding electronic communication use during personal hours in that they should not expect employees to be always available (Derks et al., 2015). The specific problem was a need to understand the lived experiences of professional workers near Washington, DC who coped with constant pressure to monitor and immediately respond to electronic communications during nonwork hours for work-related purposes (see Mellner, 2016; Wright et al., 2014). This chapter includes a discussion of the literature search strategies that supported the examination of empirical studies to develop an understanding of the factors that influence work and nonwork domains. I describe the databases, key terms, conceptual framework, and methodology for this study. The literature review covers work-life balance, boundary and border theory, information and communication technology, and psychological implications.

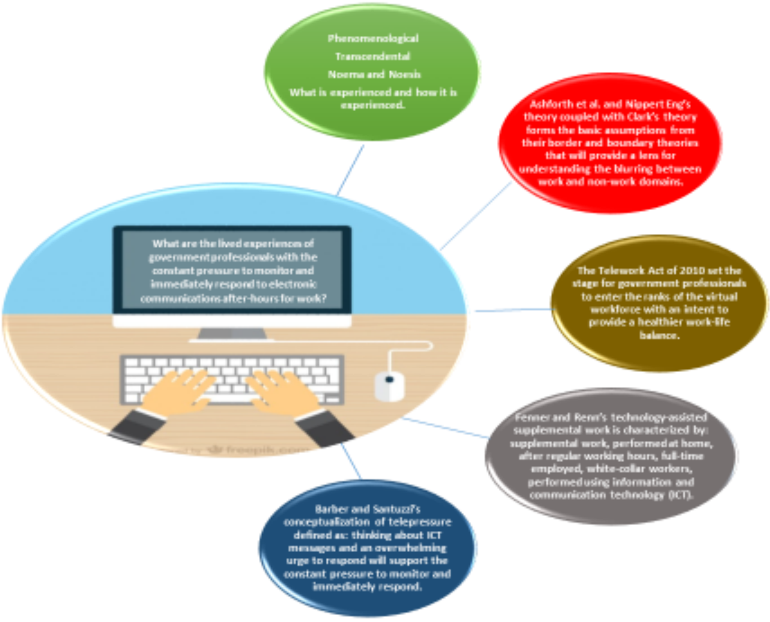
Literature Search Strategy

The strategy of the literature review is to define the topic and key words, read and evaluate previous work about the subject, and gather a variety of resources (Warburton & Macauley, 2014). There was a continual search of previous studies, journal articles, and books based on a series of key words. Chen, Wang, and Lee (2016) asserted that interpreting and synthesizing pertinent literature into an intelligible story aligned around a research question is sometimes a difficult process. The intent of the literature review was to review published literature which addressed boundary theory, border theory, information and communication technology, work-life balance, and psychological conditions. The literature search included several academic databases primarily from the Walden University library. The search engines and databases included ProQuest, Google Scholar, ABI/INFORM Global, EBSCOhost, Emerald Management Journals, SAGE Premier, Science Direct, PsycINFO, and Thoreau.

The literature reviewed was focused on the most recent sources available for this study. The goal was to use literature published between 2013 and 2018. A combination of key search terms helped to narrow the search for sources. Terms and combinations used to search for applicable literature include the following: *qualitative research*, *phenomenology*, *boundary management*, *blurring boundaries*, *role boundary*, *spillover*, *domains*, *information and communication technology*, *connectivity*, *electronic communication technology*, *work-life balance*, *work-life conflict*, *alternate work arrangements*, *flexible work arrangements*, *telework*, *work-role engagement*, *imbalance*, *stress*, *employee well-being*, and *psychological availability*. Search strategies such as Boolean operators were used to narrow the search results. A search of recent peer-reviewed articles and foundational works was useful in identifying studies on electronic communication, information and communication technology, boundary theory, and border theory. Conducting a thorough review of relevant literature was key to identifying a conceptual model suitable for this study.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of a study reflects the concepts, theories, and assumptions that guided the effort of the research (Miles et al., 2014). Figure 1illustrates the conceptual framework that supported this study. Boundary and border theory was the primary lens for the conceptual framework used to explore professional workers' experiences. Seminal researchers (Ashforth et al., 2000; Clark, 2000; Nippert-Eng, 1996) conceptualized boundary theory as segmented or integrated and border theory as work and nonwork and asserted that individuals differed regarding the extent to which their home and work roles were segmented or integrated. Work and nonwork domains function independently, and individuals can compartmentalize the conflicting demands between the two roles (Mellner, 2016). The intent of the current study was to describe the phenomenon of what compelled professional workers to monitor and respond to electronic communication immediately while in a nonworking situation (see Barber & Santuzzi, 2015; Wright et al., 2014). A qualitative transcendental phenomenological design was used to gain insight into how professional workers perceived their role in what they experience, and how professional workers reflected on their role providing descriptions of their experiences (see Moustakas, 1994).



Phenomenological
Transcendental
Noema and Noesis
What is experienced and how it is experienced.

Ashforth et al. and Nippert Eng's theory coupled with Clark's theory forms the basic assumptions from their border and boundary theories that will provide a lens for understanding the blurring between work and non-work domains.

What are the lived experiences of government professionals with the constant pressure to monitor and immediately respond to electronic communications after-hours for work?

The Telework Act of 2010 set the stage for government professionals to enter the ranks of the virtual workforce with an intent to provide a healthier work-life balance.

Fenner and Renn's technology-assisted supplemental work is characterized by: supplemental work, performed at home, after regular working hours, full-time employed, white-collar workers, performed using information and communication technology (ICT).

Barber and Santuzzi's conceptualization of telepressure defined as: thinking about ICT messages and an overwhelming urge to respond will support the constant pressure to monitor and immediately respond.

Figure 1. Conceptual framework.

Transcendental Phenomenological Research Design

Many of the current studies (Mellner, 2016; Wright et al., 2014) involved quantitative approaches, which did not address the pertinent nuances concerning professional workers' electronic communications behavior outside of normal working hours. The current study added to the existing body of knowledge through use of a qualitative method and transcendental phenomenological design. A phenomenological design helped to support my intent to understand the lived experiences of professional workers who manage the persistent pressure to monitor and answer e-mails and text messages for work-related purposes in an immediate way during nonwork hours. The description of individuals' lived experiences regarding a phenomenon is attained through phenomenological research (Astalin, 2013; Moustakas, 1994; Schwandt, 2015). Thick descriptive data were used to describe the experiences of the participants. Descriptions may be advantageous in that they not only provide in-depth understanding of the experiences of individuals but also enable people to reflect on and make sense of their own experiences (Anney, 2014). In addition to being advantageous, a phenomenological research design can elicit information that may inform the creation of a theory (Moustakas, 1994).

Phenomenology is a means for understanding the phenomenon that affects the lives of individuals from their conscious perspectives (Giorgi, 2014). Although phenomenology had a single founder, Husserl, it has developed into a diverse tradition (Giorgi, 2014). Transcendental phenomenology centers on personal experience as a source of knowledge and marks between two perspectives: natural attitude or beliefs and phenomenological attitude or the total situation for the experience (Moustakas, 1994). The descriptive method of transcendental phenomenology entails assessing individuals who have experienced a phenomenon. Moustakas (1994) noted that transforming objects that individuals take for granted under a phenomenological attitude and everyday experience into phenomena, researchers aim at clarifying the essence of the participants' experience. Moustakas argued that for individuals to understand the objects that appear before them, regardless of those objects' actuality or ambiguity, individuals must return to and recognize themselves in the experience.

Noema and Noesis

Transcendental phenomenology is associated with the concept of intentionality (Giorgi, 2014; Moustakas, 1994). Consciousness is intentional in that individuals direct toward real or imagined objects (Moustakas, 1994). An individual can interpret consciousness as an alternative expression for intentionality. Intention refers to the focus of the mind to the object, and directedness is an inherent feature of intentionality (Moustakas, 1994). Intentionality incorporates noema and noesis, which both are references to meanings (Moustakas, 1994). Noema is the "what" of the experience, referring to the noematic meanings or textures of the phenomenon. Noema is not the actual object, but the experience of the phenomenon. Noesis is the way in which the noema or the "what" is experienced, referring to the structures of the phenomenon. Through thinking, feeling, reflecting, and remembering, noesis brings into being the consciousness of something. For every noema there is noesis, and for every noesis there is noema (Gill, 2014; Moustakas, 1994).

Moustakas's (1994) sequential method specified a logical way to identify and categorize participants' perceptions. By using the sequential method, researchers can discover the essence of the experience illuminating the noema and noesis of the experience occurred (Husserl, 1913). Moustakas tied in the concepts of noema and noesis into the synthesis of the data. Noema associates with textural description and noesis was attendant to the structural description of the experience (Moustakas, 1994).

Literature Review

With the introduction of technology-mediated devices, working professionals used various types of information and communication technologies such as laptops, tablets, and smartphones to extend their work-related tasks into their nonwork domains (Adkins & Premeaux, 2014; Wright et al., 2014). Working professionals who also used information and communication technologies after-hours for work-related purposes diminished boundary distinctions, which detracted from work-life balance (Butts et al., 2015; Derks et al., 2015). The use of a literature review in a phenomenological study frames the problem and sets the stage for the inquiry (Moustakas, 1994). Within the current literature review, two studies conducted by Derks et al. (2015) and Boswell et al. (2016) provided the context of the research problem and the foundation for this study.

Primary Research Studies Providing the Foundation for this Study

Derks et al. (2015) conducted a 4-day quantitative study addressing the moderating role of social norms and employee work engagement on smartphone use and work-home interference. A recent study by Mazmanian et al. (2013) helped form the premise of the Derks et al.'s study. Mazmanian et al. showed that work performed by employees working in an always-on culture was enabled by information and communication technology that involved connectivity, urgency, and a blurring of boundaries between work and nonwork domains. The facilitation of information and communication technologies had been characterized by blurring the boundaries between work and nonwork domains, which made the domains more permeable (Mazmanian et al., 2013).

Derks et al. (2015) examined two potential moderators of smartphone use and daily work-home interference. Derks et al. accumulated data via an online questionnaire using a convenience sample for work engagement. A total of 100 employees participated. Derks et al. were able to replicate previous study findings of Boswell and Olson-Buchanan's study conducted in 2007 that showed how smartphone use was positively related to work-home interference. Derks et al.'s study supported the boundary theory research of Ashforth et al. (2000) and Kreiner, Hollensbe, and Sheep (2009) in that higher work-family conflict occurred when the lines of demarcation that bound work and family roles were permeable. A weakness from the Derks et al. study was that supervisors did not provide a clear understanding of their expectations regarding smartphone use in private hours. Analyses performed by Derks et al. showed that engaged workers could prevent work from interfering too much with their private lives, although they use their smartphones during evening hours.

Boswell et al. (2016) conducted a series of surveys on managing after-hours electronic work communication. Boswell et al. focused on the frequency of employee use of e-mail, Blackberries, cell phones, voice mail, pagers, and personal digital assistants. Boswell et al. used a seven-day sample to examine why some employees chose to engage in and respond to work-related tasks after-hours when it was not in their job description; Boswell et al. also addressed the emotional day-to-day variations in employees' responses to work--nonwork conflict. Boswell et al. wanted to know what driving force caused an employee to use communication technologies outside of traditional work hours. The study population consisted of 360 employees, which included 130 supervisors/managers and 35 significant others (Boswell et al., 2016).

Boswell et al. revealed several findings from their study. One finding related to how motivated employees' beliefs were imperative in banishing communication technology use during nonwork hours. More professional minded employees and employees who identified more with their jobs reported staying online at all times during nonwork times. A second finding involved how being attached emotionally to an organization did not overly influence an employee to stay connected to the office during nonwork times. A third finding revealed that employees associated getting ahead and advancing their careers as to why they chose to stay connected after hours, rather than oppose the employer. These findings support the intent and purpose of this current study.

Earlier results of Boswell and Olson-Buchanan's (2007) study addressed another critical question that centered on related ramifications of after-hours availability using or not using communication devices past the normal workday boundaries (Boswell et al., 2016). The focus of the original study overall was on work to nonwork conflict and explored the idea of the requirements of work interference with the requirements of nonwork. Boswell et al. found that increased awareness of work--nonwork conflict as a linkage with not logging off after hours. Relatedly, the Boswell et al. study found that staying connected electronically had a certain distinctiveness when it came to working interference, which may be because of the high likelihood of impulsive interferences during nonwork time. In addition to the work interferences, there was the possibility the individual may have created disturbances.

Several years later, Boswell et al. still had an on-going debate and wanted to know what about being bound to work was the most challenging. To address this matter, Boswell et al. conducted a study in 2016. The study examined how day-to-day occurrences of a particular kind of electronic communication such as e-mails and texts influenced employees' nonwork domain. Soon after participants acknowledged electronic communication from their office beyond regular working hours, the Boswell et al. study consisted of input collected over 7 days from 341 employees. The strength of the Boswell et al. study was the positive and negative insights of being continually available to work. Boswell et al. purposely concentrated on key components of electronic communications. Results from the Boswell et al. study disclosed an employee's experience was about the extensiveness of the electronic communication. Not describing how employees that experienced more annoyance the longer time they spent on responding to e-mails and texts was a weakness of the study. The anger experienced caused some employees to believe that their work impacted the involvement of their nonwork roles such as their family or church events. When the communication tone was perceived to be negative, the negative tone took effect on employees and caused them to display more annoyance.

To summarize, Derks et al. (2015) postulated that work in today's society, particularly enabled by information and communication technology, involved connectivity, immediacy, and blurring the boundary between work and nonwork roles. Prior research conducted by Boswell et al. (2016) suggested that a continued lack of work-life balance arising from being on call all the time can, over time, affect workers' health and psychological well-being. Although the work and nonwork domains were not completely separate, in the literature, it was contended that the two domains have specific boundaries (Bish et al., 2014; Hayman & Rasmussen, 2013). The evident boundaries when kept separate could make it easier to maintain the two roles. The Derks et al. quantitative study concluded that receiving work-related electronic communications during nonwork hours did create an imbalance between work and nonwork domains. The Boswell et al. study concluded that receiving electronic communications after-hours for work-related purposes did affect work performance.

The Boswell et al. and Derks et al. studies helped to lay the foundation for this current research study and informed the development of four components and key areas. The four components and key areas were relevant to this qualitative transcendental phenomenological research study on self-perceived work-life balance and the impact of working outside of normal working hours. The review of the literature for this study explored current research about the four components and key areas that related to the research problem. An organization of the literature (see Figure 2) focused this research study on the following four components: work-life balance; boundary and border theory; flexible work arrangements; and information and communication technology.

First, I presented a review of work-life balance including a section on defining work-life balance, a historical background and current studies of work-life balance. Next, I presented the assumptions of boundary and border theories which provided a lens for understanding the interaction between work and nonwork domains as appropriate to this study. Boundary and border theory researchers (Ashforth et al., 2000; Clark, 2000; Nippert-Eng, 1996) addressed the integration and segmentation of blurring the boundaries between the different life domains to facilitate a balance between the two domains. After I reviewed boundary theory and border theory, a discussion on spillover theory followed. Then, I discussed flexible work arrangements and telework as a flexible work arrangement. Finally, I reviewed the literature on information and communication technology that led to discussions on psychological implications, technostress, and a recently developed construct referred to as workplace telepressure. Psychological availability and well-being also aligned under information and communication technology. Altogether, the intent of the current theories and studies regarding work-related information and communication technology use outside of normal working hours addressed the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the lived experiences of professional workers with constant pressure to monitor and immediately respond to work-related electronic communications during nonwork hours?

RQ2: How does being available during nonwork hours for work-related purposes affect work-life balance?

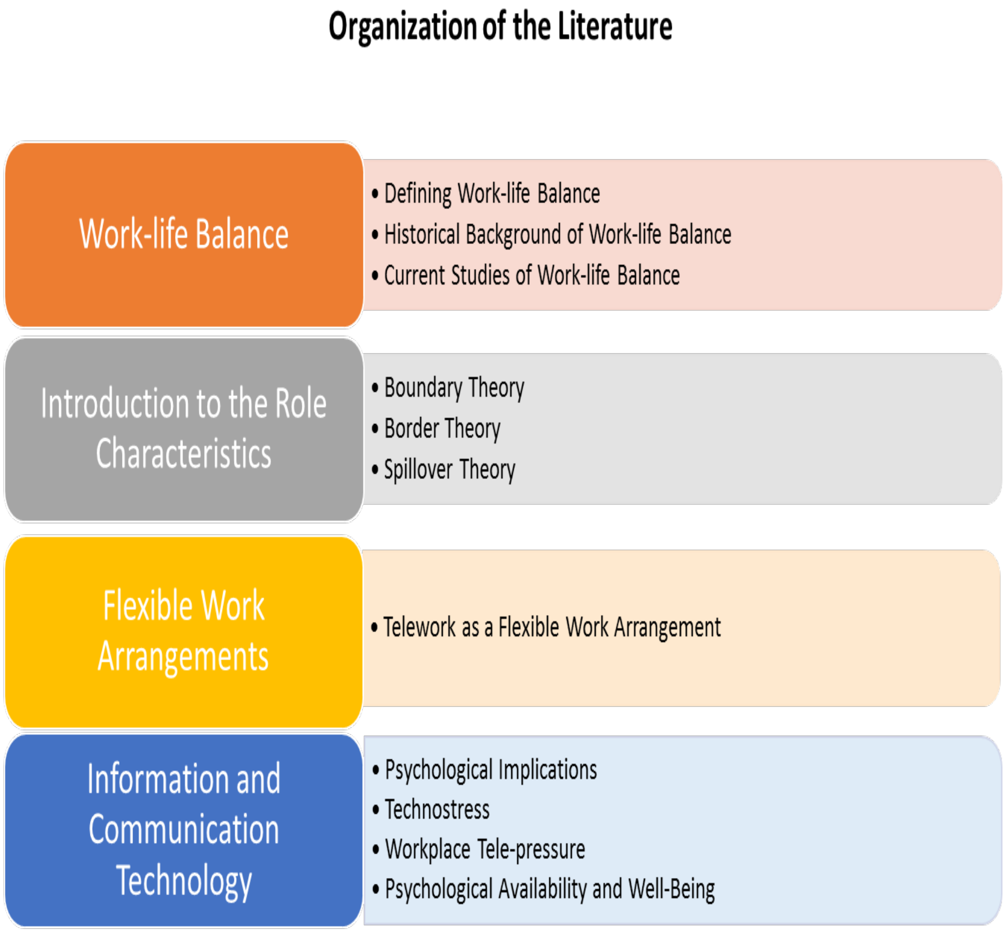

Organization of the Literature
Work-life Balance
• Defining Work-life Balance
• Historical Background of Work-life Balance
• Current Studies of Work-life Balance
Introduction to the Role Characteristics
• Boundary Theory
• Border Theory
• Spillover Theory
Flexible Work Arrangements
• Telework as a Flexible Work Arrangement
Information and Communication Technology
• Psychological Implications
• Technostress
• Workplace Tele-pressure
• Psychological Availability and Well-Being

Figure 2. Organization of the literature.

Work-Life Balance

In the literature, Duxbury et al. (2014) asserted how broadly criticized the construct of work-life balance and the contemporary use of digital electronic technologies added further complexity to the conflict of home and work. According to Wright et al. (2014), an increase in work-life imbalances as well as related outcomes, such as employee well-being, stress, and psychological availability existed as employees began using information and communication technologies more regularly for tasks related to work during nonwork time. There was an investigation on the concept of work-life balance on an individual level work-life balance factors such as the impact of work-life balance programs on some employee-level outcomes such as stress, commitment, and productivity (Piszczek & Berg, 2014). Derks et al. (2014) explored how work-life balance affects performance at the organizational level. Behaviors such as keeping smartphones turned on during the off-job time, glancing at them repeatedly, carrying them around all the time, and responding to e-mails in the evening may have a negative effect on work-life balance (Cavazotte, Lemos, & Villadsen, 2014; Mazmanian et al., 2013).

Defining Work-Life Balance

There were many constructs developed to define work-life balance, as well as the use of a multitude of labels when referring to work-life balance. The abundance of constructs and the mounting quantity of research have resulted in a terminological misunderstanding about constructing labels and in a lack of definitional clarity. Such terminological misunderstanding is known as jingle and jangle fallacies (Block, 1995;

Larsen & Bong, 2016). Block described the jangle fallacy as a situation in which two things that are the same or nearly the same have different labeling. Block's description of a jingle fallacy is when two different things occurred but have similar labeling and easily mistaken as interchangeable. As is discussed below, jingle and jangle fallacies are particularly widespread in the work-life balance literature.

The term work-life balance remains a topic of debate among scholars, with many arguing for one definition or another (Williams, Berdahl, & Vandello, 2016). Although there is not a singular definition of work-life balance, a few are relatable to this study. The following researchers (Greenhaus & Ten Brummelhuis, 2013; Nam, 2014) defined work-life balance as engaged in and equally satisfied with personal life, the demands of nonwork, as well as the demands of work, and the capacity to balance the employees' work and personal lives for the well-being of the employee. The relationship between an individual's quality of work life and their overall sense of well-being or quality of life is how Derks et al. (2014) defined work-life balance. Haar, Russo, Suñe, and Ollier-Malaterre (2014) defined work-life balance as an individual's perception of how well he or she balanced life roles. Several other definition that applied: the degree to which a person finds symmetry among familial, social, personal, and employment obligations (Hayman & Rasmussen, 2013). The extent to which individuals deal with competing demands on his or her time from different domains is broadly referred to as work and nonwork (Hislop et al., 2015). According to Kossek et al. (2014), work-life balance is a metaphor for resolving the temporal conflict as employees struggle to handle competing demands on their time from different domains, broadly conceptualized as work and life.

In the literature, there are also different labels used to refer to work-life balance. Schlachter, McDowall, Cropley, and Inceoglu (2017) provided a variety of interchangeable descriptions that they used when referring to some form of work-life balance such as, work-family balance, work-family conflict, work-family interference, work-home conflict, work-home interference, and work-family spillover.

Several authors (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964) agreed in their seminal works that work-family conflict produced simultaneous pressures from work and nonwork roles that were mutually incompatible. Because of incompatible role pressures arising from the work and family domains, effectiveness in one role hampers the experience in the other role. That is to say, work-family conflict occurred when experiences in a role interfered with meeting the requirements and achieving effectiveness in the other role (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). In more recent years, Allen, Cho, and Meier (2014) agreed that the essence of work-family conflict is the same as inter-role interference. Allen et al. (2014) also agreed that referring to work-family conflict is interchangeable with work-family interference. According to Greenhaus and Beutell, these various terms usually had a common conceptualization of negative interference from differing work and nonwork demands.

Historical Background of Work-Life Balance

In their seminal work Kahn et al. (1964) suggested that the history on the construct of work-life balance could be traced back at least to the 1930s indicating when organizations proposed reduced working hours and alternate work shifts. According to the literature on earlier research that began forming, a semblance of work-life balance appeared in the 1960s (Williams et al., 2016). Pleck (1977) reported that research on the relationship and conflict between paid work and family appeared in the literature as early as 1964 and in 1965 by researchers Rapoport and Rapoport. Pleck purported that the Rapoport and Rapoport study focused on work and family and looked at each domain as an independent segment. Allen et al. pointed out that Rapoport and Rapoport's research on paid work and family did not consider other aspects of life.

Kahn et al. performed a quantitative research study on the separation of work and family (nonwork) roles regarding space and time, which had three objectives. The three objectives were: to describe the nature, prevalence, and effects of role conflict and ambiguity; to explain the roots, causes; and consequences of role conflict on individual tension, satisfaction, and self-esteem; and to modify existing normative theory on organizational practices based on the results of the study. The Kahn et al. study dealt with the effects of role conflict on individual tension, satisfaction, and self-esteem; and worked with a wide range of variables, both organizational and individual. Kahn et al. used clinical, survey, and personality-measurement approaches to role conflict. Kahn et al. had concern for the interrelation between personality and social structure as this was outside of the norm from their past research contributions on leadership, productivity, and organizational change. Kahn et al. used a sample and population of 53 role sets, also described as a focal person and his role senders. Analyses performed by Kahn et al. suggested that work occurred during designated hours and at a place away from home and that transition between work and home-based (nonwork) roles were distinct and well defined. Mazmanian et al. (2013) stated that work now can be done anytime and anywhere.

Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) described work-life imbalance as an occurrence that happened when role demands in one domain interfered with the demands of a role in another domain. Greenhaus and Beutell went on to say that imbalances could occur in both directions, nonwork to work and work to nonwork. Greenhaus and Beutell further stated that work-life imbalances arose from overlapping pressures from work and nonwork domains. Work and nonwork domains are often considered conflicting due to the involvement in each domain (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Greenhaus and Beutell's discussions of sources of work-life imbalances suggested that the role permeability association with the drain of personal resources created space and time-based conflict for the individual. Devoting time to work-related tasks while in the nonwork domain may create strain, and make it difficult to meet requirements of either role. Greenhaus and Beutell's research suggested that role or boundary blurring might result in work-life imbalances.

Kanter (2008) researched work and family connections and raised the question of how work in organizations could better account for the interface between the personal lives of people and their work. Kanter paved the way for forward thinking and embraced the positivism philosophical approach to the quantitative study of work-life balance. Organizations began realizing work-life balance practices as being a reasonable benefit to retain talent to be competitive going forward (Kaliannan, Perumal, & Dorasamy, 2016).

Current Studies of Work-Life Balance

Work-life balance is essential in today’s world, which involves a constant rush for some. Haar et al. (2014) explained that in unbalanced work and life situations, workers and their families could incur health problems that may affect their well-being, higher stress levels, depression, disappointments in life, lower productivity, and lower performance levels. The ideal work-life balance was different for each person. But, in each case, work-life balance was about the priorities of each person and about the boundaries each person established to keep their life in balance (Haar et al., 2014). Initially, work-life balance focused on accommodating the needs of working mothers (Hilbrecht, Shaw, Johnson, & Andrey, 2008; Rapoport & Rapoport, 1965). Research on the work-life balance paradigm has since evolved to accommodate the needs of the entire working population (Alizadeh & Sipe, 2013; Allen et al., 2015).

There have been many studies conducted since the identification of work-life balance as a key issue in the modern workplace. A study conducted by Potgieter and Barnard (2010) identified themes and traits of work-life balance and the integration of the construct into the workplace and life. Potgieter and Barnard’s study on the construction of work-life balance used semistructured interviews, and they interviewed 10 employees over the course of 2 weeks. Potgieter and Barnard initially extracted 48 themes during the coding and identified six themes central to the constructs of work-life balance and established a need for organizational support.

The first theme focused on the interaction of multiple roles. Multiple roles created a potential conflict because expectations forced individuals to divide resources (Potgieter

& Barnard, 2010). The balance was not just about work and family roles, but also about having the opportunity to tend to all needs. Matthews et al. (2014) concluded the use of workplace electronic communication and the use of information and communication technology can have a substantial effect on an individual's work-life balance as the worker makes and effort to manage the boundaries between work and personal life. Higgins et al. (2014) noted weakness was that employees suffered from work-life imbalance when the employee did not establish a self-imposed boundary between their work and family roles. The second theme analyzed the valuation of the work-life dynamic. This theme explored what aspects of life defined satisfaction. Potgieter and Barnard (2010) found that individuals put more emphasis on the quality of balance rather than the consistency of balance. The flexibility of work schedules was an overemphasized solution used as an example to show that data had no positive contribution to work-life balance (Potgieter & Barnard, 2010). The third theme revealed how work-life balance was subjective. Many individuals altered their definition of work-life balance based on their needs and expectations in different life roles (Potgieter & Barnard, 2010). Some interview participants valued family over work and other participants valued work over family, altering the definition.

In contrast to these findings, Kumar and Chakraborty (2013) presented an objective perspective and stated workers related work-life balance to personal satisfaction with work and family time. The fourth theme viewed work and life as positive and enabling experiences that may often overlap. This theme addressed the understanding that neither work nor life could receive 100% of an individual's time or effort. This holistic approach supported multiple roles continuously being address compared to splitting life into sections with spillover occurring from one to another (Potgieter & Barnard, 2010). The fifth theme was similar to the third theme and viewed work-life balance as evolving. But, instead of individuals' needs, changes were based on life stages. The expectations of life changed as individuals evolved and transitioned through stages in the reaction to work and life roles (Potgieter & Barnard, 2010). Potgieter and Barnard identified in the sixth theme that it was essential to have multiple role dynamics in management working towards work-life balance.

Potgieter and Barnard named time management, prioritization, and support structures in their study as vital in attempts to achieve work-life balance. Time management forced an individual to know what time was available for all tasks required for work and life. In utilizing time management, one had to prioritize. The ability to prioritize can allow an individual to experience greater balance. Lastly, support structures would be important to balance. Unexpected situations occurred that could alter the plans, time management, and prioritization of work and life creating the need for support systems (spouse, parents, siblings, and friends). Potgieter and Barnard reported that organizational support was also needed to establish and achieve work-life balance.

From a more recent study, Kaliannan et al. (2016) examined how medical professionals of different generations managed their work and life in such an intense work environment and achieved their job satisfaction. The purpose of the study was to comprehensively investigate how medical professionals that belonged to different generations perceived their work-life balance and associated it with the impact on their levels of job satisfaction. A simple random sampling methodology was used to collect questionnaires from a total of 158 medical professionals from both the public and private sectors. Kaliannan et al. discussed how human resources practitioners believed employee work-life balance was important in fostering employee engagement and job satisfaction. Carlson, Hunter, Ferguson, and Whitten (2014) did not agree in their study and showed unpredictability with job satisfaction and family satisfaction. Kaliannan et al. stated that work-life balance was the dividing line between work-life and personal-life where forming a separation between an individual's career, business, profession, and every other domain that added up to the individual's total life. Kaliannan et al. described work-life balance as achieving the desired combination of participation in both work and other segments of life, and further added that the desired combination did not stay stagnant but changed as an individual had changed in its commitments and responsibilities.

The results of a descriptive and inferential analysis yielded from the completed questionnaires revealed that a majority of the medical professionals did not enjoy a balanced work-life integration given their work commitments especially of managing employers and patients' expectations. The results also indicated that health professionals born before the 1980s who had been in the field longer perceived better work-life balance that led to higher job satisfaction. In a modern economic setting, work-life balance was viewed as an important workplace trait and grew increasingly significant to preserve healthy and inspired employees (Kaliannan et al., 2016). Kaliannan et al. found for doctors who worked around the clock indeed of saving human lives compromised their obligations. Kaliannan et al. indicated that doctor's workload was too heavy and as a result, it led to a poor work-life balance and reduced job and life satisfaction. In a majority of the doctors that were studied, Kaliannan et al. found them to have a moderate level of work-life balance, which could have linkages due to spillover effect of work.

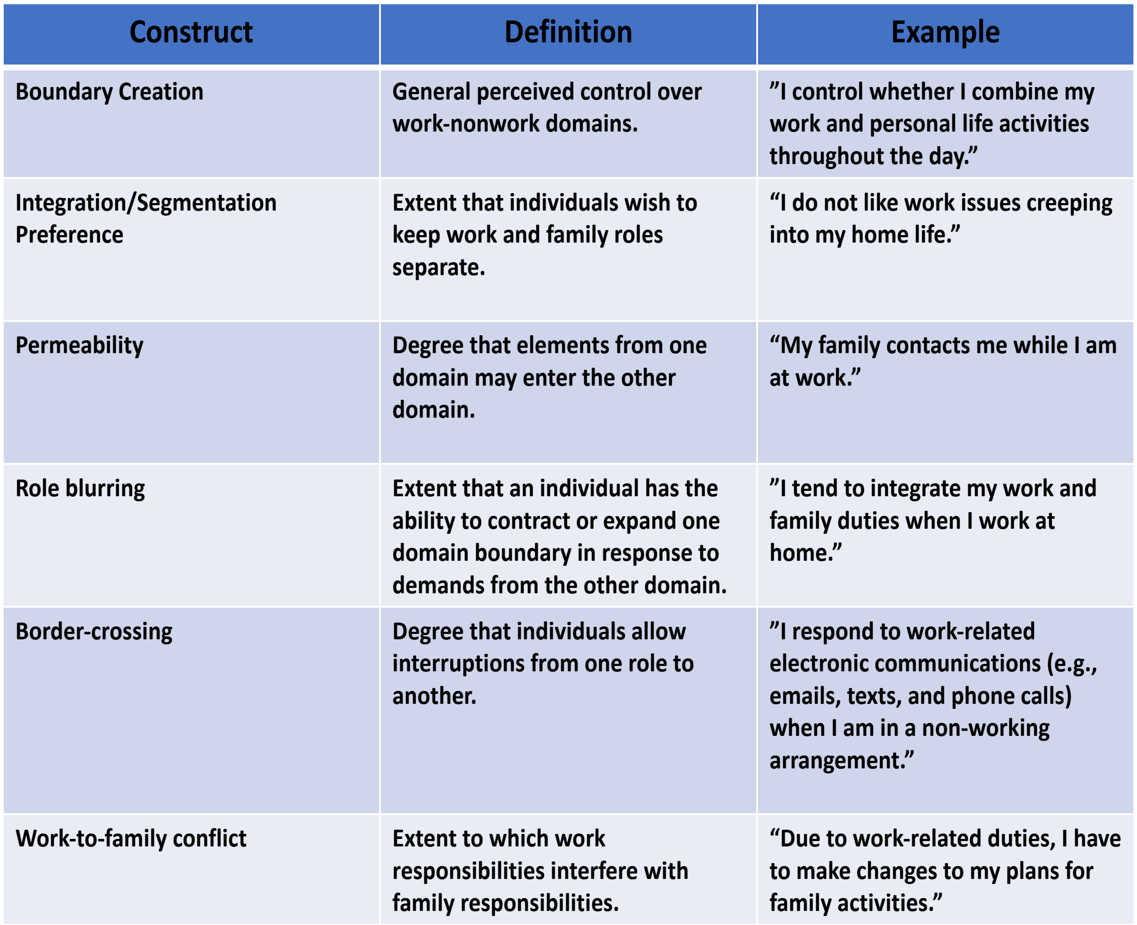
Kaliannan et al. found some factors that were stumbling blocks to foster better work-life balance and worker engagement like family, organizational philosophy, leadership, family and individual factors. Kaliannan et al. suggested that management should embrace a vision for the hospitals that support flexibility as doctors find time to be the most expensive commodity. Kaliannan et al. believed in the accomplishment of greater work-life balance with the appropriate organizational support system extending from the training aids used to work to the structural leadership and culture. Kaliannan et al. concluded that organizations need to satisfy the attention of doctors of both generations in delivering and promoting work-life balance. The author’s data indicated that leveraging the family-friendly work-life balance programs developed engagement and employees were productive, happier and motivated.

Moriarity, Brown, and Schultz (2014) suggested that with the millennial generation growing concern with balancing their professional life and life in general, work-life balance became more important. Some confounding factors that Moriarity et al. (2014) anticipated, such as the number of employees retiring outpacing those coming into the workforce, overwhelmingly diverted attention to managing work and nonwork. Companies focused more on the individual’s expectations during challenging economic times and turned their attention from work-life balance programs. The increase in employee expectations created a situation where retiring workers that joined the workforce potentially worsen an already challenging situation (Moriarity et al., 2014).

Domain and Role Characteristics

With the work-life balance shift, the foundations of boundary and border theory were identified (Allen et al., 2014; Ashforth et al., 2000; Clark, 2000). Both theories are rooted in organizational role theory (Biddle, 1986; Katz & Kahn, 1978). Katz and Kahn defined an organization as an open system of roles. The way individuals manage their boundaries around work and family may be a source of order by the delineation of expected behaviors for each role.

Boundary and border theories provide a framework to raise awareness of how individuals create and manage the boundaries between work and nonwork. Boundary theory was applied to work-family interactions to better understand the meanings people assigned to home and work (Mellner, Aronsson, & Kecklund, 2014; Nippert-Eng, 1996) as well as the ease and frequency of transitioning between work and family roles (Ashforth et al., 2000; Mellner et al., 2014). Clark developed border theory in response to displeasure with the work-family theories at the time and was limited to work and family domains. A focus on boundary theory is the health of interpersonal relationships and the border between individual and organization identity (Ashforth et al., 2000). Overall, boundary and border theories and the foundations of work-life balance share similarities, but they are looked at as separate entities and is vital for both organizations and employees (Allen et al., 2014). Also, similar to work-life balance, there is conceptual and operational overlap as well as terminological confusion between boundary and border theories. Confusion with the terminology also results in a jingle and jangle fallacy (Allen et al., 2014; Block, 1995). A recent study conducted by Allen et al. (2014) showed that most of the literature had adopted the term boundary theory over border theory. Figure 3 provides a sample of key terms associated with boundary management domain and role characteristics.



Construct	Definition	Example
Boundary Creation	General perceived control over work-nonwork domains.	”I control whether I combine my work and personal life activities throughout the day.”
Integration/Segmentation Preference	Extent that individuals wish to keep work and family roles separate.	“I do not like work issues creeping into my home life.”
Permeability	Degree that elements from one domain may enter the other domain.	“My family contacts me while I am at work.”
Role blurring	Extent that an individual has the ability to contract or expand one domain boundary in response to demands from the other domain.	”I tend to integrate my work and family duties when I work at home.”
Border-crossing	Degree that individuals allow interruptions from one role to another.	”I respond to work-related electronic communications (e.g., emails, texts, and phone calls) when I am in a non-working arrangement.”
Work-to-family conflict	Extent to which work responsibilities interfere with family responsibilities.	“Due to work-related duties, I have to make changes to my plans for family activities.”

Figure 3. Boundary management constructs, definitions, and examples.

Boundary Theory

Boundary theory refers to ways in which individuals foster, sustain, or change boundaries to streamline the world in which they live (Ashforth et al., 2000). Ashforth et al. noted that boundary theory transcended many fields and was utilized to answer questions referencing role transition. In the literature, boundaries and boundary management practices were explored in different ways. Early seminal research on boundaries reported on by Star and Griesemer (1989) paved the way for many to consider the concept and what constitute boundaries. Boundary theory, similar to border theory, addressed day-to-day role transitions and boundary management (Ashforth et al., 2000). Border theory is vastly broader than boundary theory. Border theory places emphasis on the psychological movement between cognitive boundary roles. A recent study conducted by Duranova and Ohly (2016) showed work hours, also referred to as temporal boundaries, got neglected in the border theory; and the physical boundaries referred to as gates were not the main idea. The transitions beyond the work domains additionally considered boundary theory practices and boundary theory included the daily transitions between work and life involving various nonwork transitions (Duranova & Ohly, 2016).

An earlier study on boundary and border theory conducted by Boswell and Olson-Buchanan (2007) assessed the effects for work-life conflict among staff that were non-academic university employees. In accordance with the theories, the results suggested that role identification was related to role integration. High integrating employees who used communication technologies during nonwork time reported more conflict between their work and life. A later study conducted by Boswell et al. (2016) rendered similar findings. Boswell et al. found information and communication technology use on the relationship between individual factors of segmentation preference and work role identification, among professional workers, blurred the work and nonwork domains.

Boundary theory focused on how individuals created or negated daily boundaries across work and nonwork domains and border theory addressed how boundary management influenced work-family balance. The creation, maintenance, and modification of boundaries between the work and nonwork domains differed in employees of boundary and border theories. Role identification and the integration preference that manifested as the employees' characteristics served as the causes of role crossing (Ashforth et al., 2000). Boundary permeability is the degree to which an employee is physically placed in a work or nonwork domain but psychologically and behaviorally involved in a nonwork or work domain (Ashforth et al., 2000). Boundary theory and border theory assumed that the use of information and communication technology for work-related purposes after hours was connected with blurring the roles (Li, Miao, Zhao, & Lehto, 2013). Blurring the roles was asserted to lead to higher levels of work-to-family conflict (Duxbury et al., 2014). Work-to-family conflict may be moderated by individuals' segmentation/integration preference. Researchers of boundary theory (Ashforth et al., 2000; Nippert-Eng, 1996) suggested that individuals create physical boundaries (e.g., work setting in an office), temporal boundaries (e.g., typical work hours), and psychological boundaries (e.g., thinking patterns) between family and work to manage multiple life roles.

By using the characteristics of role boundaries and role identity, Nippert-Eng was able to map any two sets of roles such as employee or parent along a continuum ranging from high segmentation to high integration. The qualitative study conducted by Nippert-Eng entitled "Home and Work," covered how people negotiated the boundaries between their paid work and their home lives, and implications of the two domains. The study was based on interviews with 72 employees who work in several different career fields at a research lab in the Northeast United States. Nippert-Eng argued that people fluctuated somewhere along a range between the integration and segregation of paid work and home life. Nippert-Eng reported that concerning paid work, that three different types of employers that formed the options people had at home and work. A *bureaucratic* employer prohibited the intrusion of family life into paid work; a *greedy* employer demanded the interruption of employment responsibilities into the home, and a *discretionary* employer allowed workers to choose how they constructed boundaries between work and home. Nippert-Eng discussed that there was no distinction between home and work for people who integrated. Nippert-Eng further added that integrators have one way of life; integrators tend to blend work-to-home and home-to-work activities.

Border Theory

Borders act like the lines of demarcation between work and nonwork domains (Clark, 2000). Border theory likewise offers a framework to aid the balance between the two domains. Like boundary theory, border theory also refers to three main forms of boundaries: physical, temporal, or psychological that are associated with work and nonwork roles. Border theory suggested that professional employees go in and out of a daily border-crossers status as they transit between work and home. The main suggestion is that although work and family are two different domains, they are interrelated and mutually influence each other (Allen et al., 2014; Clark, 2000). Individuals are disturbed by their surroundings, as are the differences in the two domains, while they also affect the surroundings. The major distinction between the domains was often distinguished in the cultures of the domains. The domains, work and nonwork, could create rather different probabilities about guidelines, patterns of thinking, and behaviors, then, alter behaviors (Nippert-Eng, 1996). The level of cultural variances has had consequences for day-to-day efforts to change. Clark (2000) reported that in some people, the demarcation between the workplace and nonwork role was only borderline. While cognate domains and the circadian transitions were not authoritatively mandating, individuals who perceived high contrast between distinctive domains experienced daily transitions as more injunctively authorizing and, thus, their work-life balance was impaired (Clark, 2000). Clark also stated that other circumstantial factors of border theory were social actors referred to as border-keepers, who were mostly the supervisor at work; and at home, they would be the significant others who constrained the resilience of border-crossers to handle the conflicts of cross-role demands.

Clark postulated that individuals varied regarding the supervision of role blurring or border-crossing to achieve the preferred balance, that suggested good functioning and satisfaction at home and work, with slight role conflict. Border-crossers varied in where they drew the line between work and home on a scale, ranging from high segmentation to high integration (Clark, 2000; Nippert-Eng, 1996). Integrators were likely to blend their work and nonwork domains, while others labeled segmentors preferred to maintain a separation between work and nonwork domains, to prevent role blurring. The preference of integrators is to conduct their personal business at work and have a job-related office space at home. The segmentors, on the other hand, preference was to separate their work and home roles spatially and temporally by creating designated time (Ashforth et al., 2000). In the information and communication technology-related perspective, employees who favored segmenting were not prone to use technology-mediated devices after-hours for work purposes, where employees who chose to integrate were likelier than not to integrate (Boswell et al., 2016). As an example, the administration of separate accounts for e-mail, work, and personal phone numbers, or dedicated work and personal mobile devices may have been representative of the choice for segmenting instead of integrating. Employees that are high segmentors may choose not to check their e-mails on their personal devices or, at a minimum, they may not set notifications for banner alerts while in a nonworking status. Employees may also use different mobile numbers or different electronic devices for their personal and work-related purposes (Battard & Mangematin, 2013; Sayah, 2013), or turn technological devices off when not on the clock.

In accordance with border theory, an impending indicator of integrating versus segmenting preference was role identification. Role identification refers to the higher probability of integrating a role with other roles of the individuals. An example would be an individual’s work role in the family role. If the work role had greater importance, employees would more than likely generate boundaries that were more permeable and flexible between the roles of family and work to support the use of information and communication technology after-hours for work-related purposes.

If employees had impermeable or strong borders, it was more difficult to integrate work and nonwork roles, due to the inflexibility and the restriction on blending the roles.

Examples of impermeable borders could be when a significant other demanded that the person did not bring job-relation matters home or the employee had permission to conduct personal matters during official work hours. In contrast, permeable or weak, flexible and blurring of borders facilitated integration. An example is when blending work and personal matters are the norms.

Spillover Theory

The spillover theory, social structures, and processes, links to Katz and Kahn's (1978) open system theory on role related behavior (Piszczek, Pichler, Turel, & Greenhaus, 2016). The spillover theory focuses on the boundaries between work and nonwork (Piszczek et al., 2016). Like Clark (2000), Bakker and Demerouti (2013) posited that in spite of physical and temporal boundaries between work and life, in the spillover theory emotions and behaviors in one area of life carry over to another. An example could be an employee that did not have a good day at work could allow the emotions connected to that event spillover into the family. Berkowsky (2013) claimed that spillover serves as a linking mechanism that occurs when stress or strain from one area appears in the area of another role. The linking mechanism or analogy is between work and nonwork roles. The claim is that a linking mechanism occurs when a variable in addition to the work and nonwork role links the two roles (Berkowsky, 2013). Significant others are an example of a variable link that joined the work and family roles. Both theories and research evidence supported the fact that work and family life influenced each other. Societies, institutions, employers, and individuals could also ignore one role without creating possible potential peril to the other role (Clark, 2000).

With boundary theory as a foundation, researchers (Carlson et al., 2014) proposed that nature to spillover was an established individual difference, which emerged from the tendency to blur boundaries between life domains. More currently, an application of the role blurring concept explained a more complex overlapping of contemporary work, and family demands, that included ways stress and information and communication technologies may convolute how work tasks interfered with home life (Kinnunen et al., 2016). Individuals who preferred more flexible and permeable boundaries were likely to experience various forms of spillover because these limitations allowed both positive and negative experiences to transfer in any direction (McNall, Scott, & Nicklin, 2015). In contrast, those who preferred less flexibility and permeation of the boundaries were likely to experience less spillover regardless of guidance given that the boundaries blocked the flow of experiences between the domains (Duxbury et al., 2014). Galinsky, Aumann, and Bond (2013) suggested that an alternative work arrangement or flexible work arrangement would reduce the negative influence and increase the positive facet to achieve work-life balance.

Researchers increasingly focused on understanding the boundaries surrounding the work and nonwork domains, but there have not been many to examine the propositions set forth by the work-family theory (Matthews et al., 2014). Research on the work-family interface has predominantly focused on the negative side of combining multiple roles according to Matthews et al. (2014), yet recent research that presented a more balanced view with consideration for more complex interactions between the work and nonwork domains revealed both negative and positive spillovers in the work-family interface (Hill, Ferris, & Martinson, 2013).

Chen et al. (2009) posited spillover theory considerably influenced one another negatively and positively inter-role with fulfilling work and family commitments. In this study, Chen et al. adopted a person-environment fit approach with survey data from 528 management employees. Their study examined whether there was a greater equivalence between employee's preference to segment their work domain from their family domain. The objective was to determine if employees kept work matters at work. Chen et al. found that workers struggled with separating their work-life from their home-life, which resulted in the spillover effect. Cho, Tay, Allen, and Stark (2013) acknowledged spillover as positive experiences from one domain facilitated performance in another domain, such as work to family spillover. As well, Hill et al. (2013) recognized a less positive experiences from one domain inhibited the fulfillment of demands in another domain, such as family to work.

Kanter (2008) postulated that work and the home must be treated as independent domains. Kanter's study underlined the separation of work and family and highlighted how aspects of work affected family and aspects of a family affected work. During a prior timeframe, Pleck (1977) explored work-family role systems that identified specific roles for men and women in the family as well as in the workplace. Pleck outlined spillover theory and indicated that women encountered spillover from family to work. The men experienced spillover from work to family. Further support of Pleck's spillover theory, Hill et al. stated that individuals would compensate either positively or negatively in one area of life by overly investing in another area of life. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) switched the direction in which work-life balance was viewed by presenting work-family conflict theory in which family and work compete for attention, time, and commitment to these roles (Duxbury & Halinski, 2013).

Work-family conflict theory is described as a phenomenon of integrated role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and nonwork domains are equally incompatible in some respect (Duxbury & Halinski, 2013; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). To review work-family conflict, Pleck, Staines, and Lang (1980) suggested researchers ask three questions: How widespread is the conflict between work and nonwork in the population of employees? What forms does work-family conflict take, and what working circumstances aggravate it? Pleck et al. stressed that the work-family conflict theory did not mean the idea was equal to integrated role conflict. Past and current research acknowledged by Coenen and Kok (2014) implied that conflict ensued when there was an imbalance between work and home. Galinsky et al., 2013 suggested a flexible or alternative work arrangement would minimize the negative influence and maximize the positive aspect to achieve work-life balance.

Flexible Work Arrangements

In the 1980s, there was a shift in response to the changing nature of work, with work-family policies introduced as a topic (Kossek et al., 2014). In the literature, it was reported that the composition of the phrase work-life balance was a cause of avoiding the strains of the workplace that caused work and life to go off balance (Galea, Houkes, & De Rijk, 2014). During that time, Kossek et al. stated that employers began to provide flexible work arrangements and other programs that proposed a solution to mend the imbalance by integrating work and family roles as opposed to separating the two roles. Higgins et al. (2014) referred to flexible work arrangement as a type of work that is not standard in that the work arrangement is unlike the usual 8 hours, 5 days a week schedule in an office and includes a compressed work week, part-time work, and telework. With advances in and wide-ranging access to information and communication technology, a growing number of employees of all types were able or required to attend to work matters beyond the time and location constraints of the traditional workplace (Boswell et al., 2016; Mazmanian et al., 2013). Devices such as smartphones, laptops, and tablets effectively blurred the lines between what would have been referred to as a teleworker versus any ordinary employee with a mobile device and Internet access (Boswell et al., 2016).

Work-life balance programs often existed as some form of flexible work arrangement (Okhuysen et al., 2013). Flexible work arrangements demonstrated a win-win situation that had positive outcomes associated with their implementation, that included increased employee productivity, managerial awareness and decreased turnover (Kossek et al., 2014; Vesala & Tuomivaara, 2015). Some researchers, such as Galinsky et al. (2013) disputed a true definition of work-life balance and thereby opposed the outcomes of implementing work-life balance programs.

Demerouti, Derks, Ten Brummelhuis, and Bakker (2014) described flexible work arrangements as initiatives voluntarily introduced by organizations which facilitated the reconciliation of employees’ work and personal lives. Such initiatives included: temporal arrangements that allowed employees to adjust the number of hours they worked. Examples of the initiatives included: job sharing where two employees shared one job and part-time working where an employee worked less than a full-time equivalent. Other examples of temporal arrangements are: flexi-time where employees chose a start and end time which matched their personal needs but worked certain core hours; work-life balance support such as flexible work arrangement, employee counselling, employee assistance programs, time management training, and stress management training; and teleworking/telecommuting where employees had locational flexibility in completing their work.

In the twenty-first century, information and communication technology changed how people lived, played, and worked (Alizadeh & Sipe, 2013). Much of the early work on information and communication technology conducted by Duxbury, Higgins, and Thomas (1996) focused on teleworkers or telecommuters as a specific group of employees who performed all or part of their work-related tasks remotely, typically from the home, rather than traditional offices using information and communication technologies to sustain the relationship between the employer and employee (Alizadeh & Sipe, 2013; Allen et al., 2015). As such, work in this area was expanded to more generally understand the causes and effects of employee work connectivity beyond the traditional boundaries of the workplace (Haar et al., 2014; Shahid & Azhar, 2013).

Many organizations have become a virtual workplace comprised of interdependent employees using information and communication technologies (Duxbury et al., 2014). The use of mobile connectivity facilitated flexible working arrangements by making communication easier and faster, which was beneficial for both the employees and employers. In contrast, the use of mobile technologies also served as an intrusion because it connected employees to work during nonwork hours (Graham & Folkes, 2014). Employers that allowed employees to use mobile technology devices at home on tasks for work purposes created flexibility and efficiency in productivity (Mazmanian et al., 2013). The use of mobile connectivity for work-related tasks during nonwork hours also encroached upon employees' life domain. The use of mobile connectivity also influenced employees' work-life balance (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2015).

Employees might also experience flexibility in their work schedules by working from home. Cavazotte et al. (2014) and Mazmanian et al. (2013) suggested that spatial interference occurred due to the easy accessibility to work activities by using mobile connectivity. With the added factor of mobile connectivity, nonwork hours and work hours tended to spillover into either of the domains. When an employees' preferences were to work using mobile connectivity, they tended to frequently respond more to requests or complete work tasks during nonwork hours (Arlinghaus & Nachreiner, 2014; Schieman & Young, 2013).

There were some variations of flexible work arrangements discussed in the literature. Employees who brought their children to work or had workplace autonomy were examples of a flexible work arrangement (Allen, Johnson, Kiburz, & Shockley, 2013). Workplace flexibility was the most commonly quoted family-friendly policy (Allen et al., 2013). Current research conducted by Berg, Kossek, Misra, and Belman (2014) suggested that flexibility in the workplace increased employee satisfaction, retained workers, and contributed to organizational profits. The assumption was that workers took advantage of flexible work arrangements and that their home lives were in disarray. According to Berg et al. (2014), the concept and belief that creating bliss in both domains comprised a win-win situation for all derived from recent and previous research. As a result, employees and employers alike achieved satisfaction, organizations were profitable, and employee retention was a matter of choice and preference.

Okhuysen et al. (2013) contended that work and workplaces were constantly reorganized, reformed, and reconstituted such that people who performed the work, the work arrangements, the type of technology used to perform the work, and also the purpose of the work may change. In a 2003 report on human capital, the General Accounting Office outlined 25 key practices recommended for federal agencies to implement in the development of its telework programs (U.S. General Accounting Office, 2003). Telework-related literature and guidelines were put in place to assist agencies and increase federal employees' opportunities to enter the ranks of the virtual and telecommute workforce (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2016). When telework was relatively new to the federal government, the Government Accountability Office report indicated that some organizations faced numerous challenges executing their telework programs. The report also showed that there were many barriers to participation for the increasing number of employees interested in teleworking.

The Telework Enhancement Act (the Telework Act) was legislated regulatory guidance established to help agencies overcome their resistance to telework (U.S. Office of Personnel Management, 2017). The Telework Act intended to lower operating costs, increase productivity, and provided for a healthier balance between work and personal life, with the ultimate goal to construct a mass digital landscape (U.S. Office of Personnel Management, 2017). The Telework Act was a large step forward in transforming federal employee's approach to telework. The Telework Act established a framework of requirements for executive agencies to meet when implementing telework programs. Those requirements included notifying all employees of their eligibility to telework and established telework performance measures for efficient reporting.

In the Hislop et al. (2015) qualitative study, 14 teleworking participants took part in telephone interviews to determine if mobile information and communication technologies had an impact on isolation and work-life balance. The study found that smartphones and personal Wi-Fi hotspots permitted some teleworkers to increase the footprint of their work domain separate from their home (Hislop et al., 2015). The participants indicated that mobile information and communication technologies allowed them the most freedom and autonomy. Participants like the idea that they could take care of personal matters and maintain connectivity to work. The Hislop et al. (2015) study showed that having the freedom to work with mobile information and communication technologies did help to reduce feelings of isolation. In contrast, participants reported that the use of mobile information and communication technologies did not allow them to detach from work. The participants felt as though they were always connected thereby reducing their work-life balance.

Information and Communication Technology

The fast-growing pace of technology introduced a formidable array of electronic communication devices and a variety of communication options. Information and communication technologies such as laptops, smartphones, tablets, Wi-Fi hotspots, and the Internet were instruments provided to aid employees in performing work away from the office more efficiently (Senarathne Tennakoon et al., 2013). The evolution of these tools and other sources of information helped to bring employers and employees much closer, providing the employees' a broader range of work options using information and communication technology (Mazmanian et al., 2013). As work moved beyond the traditional 8-hour day, nine-to-five, information and communication technologies allowed employees flexibility to accomplish personal tasks even if working time intruded on nonworking time. Work that intruded into nonwork time was not necessarily detrimental but could lead to a feeling that work never ends (Mazmanian et al., 2013). The relationship between information and communication technologies and role integration of work and nonwork domains is a phenomenon that has been widely debated. Haeger and Lingman (2014) suggested that sentiments towards information and communication technologies aided role integration between the work and nonwork domains.

Research among social scientists in recent years that included communication technology emerged as a significant area of work-life conflict (Kossek et al., 2014). Rising numbers of women in the workforce, an aging population, longer working hours, and more sophisticated communication technologies that enabled constant connectivity with the workplace were noted demographic changes (Wright et al., 2014). As a result, those who preferred to keep their work and personal lives separate, referred to as segmentors, viewed electronic communications as more interfering and inconvenient to their personal lives when those communications required very little time. The individuals reactions increased as the communication took a longer time to read and handle. On the other hand, those who wished to blend their work and personal lives, referred to as integrators, did not perceive the blurring of the roles as interfering with their personal lives (Wright et al., 2014).

Overall, increased organizational expectations of connectivity have changed the traditional, spatial and temporal boundaries between work and nonwork activities, and the complete ramifications of this change are unknown (Mazmanian et al., 2013). Information and communication technologies have enabled employees to work anywhere and anytime and have changed the perception of the concepts of work and nonwork time and the boundaries between them (Mazmanian et al., 2013; Ramarajan & Reid, 2013). At a glance, work-life balance has been emerging in conjunction with globalization and advancements in technology as a vehicle to increase employee communication and work (Williams et al., 2014). Organizational leaders acknowledged that employees’ use of information and communication technology improved productivity, but there was also a growing concern of work-life balance impacts (Derks et al., 2014).

Psychological Implications

Various researchers illustrated ways in which information and communication technology impacted workers (Allvin, Mellner, Movitz, & Aronsson, 2013; Fenner &

Renn, 2010; Sonnentag & Fritz, 2015). Kumar and Chakraborty (2013) discussed that psychological implications were a factor which has the potential to affect important workplace issues such as employee turnover, stress, job satisfaction, and productivity. Kumar and Chakraborty argued that the aggressiveness of the workforce, where the ability to attract and retain high earning employees were difficult, called for greater awareness of and focus on employee work-life balance interests. The implications of sometimes conflicting work and nonwork responsibilities for people management and work structures were wide-ranging (Gressgard, Amundsen, Aasen, & Hansen, 2014; Kossek, 2016). Several organizations that explored how they could help employees achieve more balance was largely due to offering diverse options of work-life balance regulatory guidance and programs dealing with stress and well-being (Kossek, 2016).

Fenner and Renn (2010) introduced the term technology-assisted supplemental work to describe people who performed work-related tasks at home after regular working hours with the use of information and communication technology such as laptops. Based on Fenner and Renn's research, they identified technology-assisted supplemental work by seven characteristics: supplemental work, performed at home, after regular working hours, by white-collar workers, full-time employed, without a formal contract that includes a compensation agreement, and performed with information and communication technologies, such as laptops, smartphones, and tablets. Supplemental work also included any work-related activity during any scheduled free time (Arlinghaus & Nachreiner, 2014).

Drawing from the technology acceptance model, Fenner and Renn conducted a quantitative study of 227 full-time employees and found that perceived usefulness and psychological climate were positively related to technology-assisted supplemental work. Fenner and Renn found that technology-assisted supplemental work was positively related to the work-to-family conflict. Additional findings showed that setting goals and priorities moderated the relationship such that people who applied certain time management strategies may have reduced the negative influence of technology-assisted supplemental work on their nonwork roles at home. When the demands on the amount of time and energy required to execute a certain role, outgrew an individual's ability to perform multiple roles reasonably, the individual may have suffered from a role overload. Role overload under this pressure could lead an individual to experience stress.

Technostress

Rapid advancements in information and communication technologies have many benefits, but there are also drawbacks. Tarafdar, Pullins, and Ragu-Nathan (2015) expressed that increased access to information led to overuse of information and communication technologies that incidentally caused stress. Technological innovation had created societal pressure to be present, engaged, or accessible at all times (Mazmanian et al., 2013). With a primary focus on work-related information and communication technologies, Brod (1984) viewed the proliferation in technology as a stressor in the workplace. Brod coined the term technostress in his book *Technostress: The Human Cost of the Computer Revolution*. Brod defined technostress as a modern disease in which people were either unable to cope or accept new computer technology in a healthy manner. According to Brod, technostress manifested in two distinct and related ways: in people who struggled to accept computer technology and in people that over-identified with computer technology, thereby creating a compulsion to engage the technology regularly. The construct of technostress is a psychological condition that can produce depression, symptoms of headaches, loss of sleep, decreased productivity, and work strain.

Tarafdar et al. (2015) conducted a study using survey data in which they collected from 237 instinctive sales professionals found a negative association between technostress creators and performance. Tarafdar et al. determined that while fostering technology, competence was important in reducing poor performance. Also revealed was that the more effective strategy would be to encourage technology self-efficacy and information system literacy (Tarafdar et al., 2015). Several studies (Brod, 1984; Lee, Chang, Lin, & Cheng, 2014; Tarafdar et al., 2015) served as evidence that technostress did affect work-life balance and an employee’s boundary management.

Workplace Telepressure

The influence of information and communication technologies and the increasing accessibility of the anytime worker dominated the literature (Barber & Santuzzi, 2015; Derks et al., 2015; Mellner, 2016). The use of information and communication technologies for work-related purposes during nonwork hours blurred the boundaries between work and nonwork responsibilities for working professionals (Hislop et al., 2013). Employees that were excessively connected and constantly exposed to disruptions in their flow of work resulted in an inevitable decline in personal efficiency and effectiveness (Mellner, 2016).

Barber and Santuzzi (2015) expressed that although they declared the benefits of electronic communications, their recent research had examined the distinctive pressures that they introduced through the lens of a construct called workplace telepressure. Barber and Santuzzi described workplace telepressure as a distinctive contributor to measures of workplace well-being in addition to perceived workplace demands and individual differences. Workplace telepressure is a strong urge for and preoccupation with quickly responding to people at work through message-based electronic communications such as e-mail (Barber & Santuzzi, 2015). Mazmanian et al. (2013) described a phenomenon called autonomy paradox and explained that experiences of telepressure might have evolved in response to employees' perceptions that continuous communication with organizational stakeholders was necessary.

In the literature, Tarafdar et al. (2015) suggested that workplace telepressure was different from connectivity behaviors specific to information and communication technology use, such as information and communication technology boundary creation and boundary crossing. Boundary creation refers to self-imposed restrictions around information and communication technology use for work purposes, while boundary crossing refers to using information and communication technologies at home to perform work-related tasks (Ashforth et al., 2000), rather than the urge or preoccupation with responding (Barber & Santuzzi, 2015). Barber and Santuzzi, believed that although workplace telepressure should be associated with less boundary creation and more boundary crossing, a type of role blurring behavior, workplace telepressure is a psychological state and not an information and communication technology behavior. Given that workplace telepressure is also specific to message-based electronic communication, it should be more closely associated with behaviors such as e-mail responding frequency rather than using information and communication technologies to conduct work at home more generally. Barber and Santuzzi suggested that employees experiencing higher levels of workplace telepressure might be more likely to give in to their urges and engage in frequent e-mail responding behaviors.

In their research, industrial and organizational psychologists Barber and Santuzzi conducted two quantitative studies from an occupational health perspective to test their theory which measured various types of workplace attitudes and behavior. In developing their new idea, referred to as a construct by psychologists, Barber and Santuzzi needed to show that their new idea was statistically different from other ideas comparable to their idea. In brief, Barber and Santuzzi were able to demonstrate that telepressure was not the same thing as being highly engaged in work or as being a workaholic. Their study showed that there was something unique about feeling the urge to respond to e-mails that went beyond how attached employees were to their primary work tasks and to completing other work-related tasks.

In their first quantitative study, Barber and Santuzzi recruited participants using survey data acquired through Amazon’s Mechanical Turk. Initially, a total of 404 participants agreed to participate. But through automatic disqualification measures, only

380 participants met the eligibility requirements. At the final count, there were 354 participant cases used for data analysis for the first study.

Results from the first study appeared to suggest that personal factors were not strong predictors of workplace telepressure. Barber and Santuzzi found three things that predicted telepressure. The first predictor was proscriptive norms, which referred to the message that organizations sent to employees regarding the appropriateness of e-mail response time. That was more of a factor in predicting telepressure than actual e-mail response time. Barber and Santuzzi stated that when employees added apologetic notes onto an e-mail such as “sorry for the slow response,” that could set a precedence that e-mails should be responded to quickly, thereby increasing telepressure. The second predictor was technology overload, which is when employees felt that technology was the cause of employees doing more work than they could handle. The third predictor was public self-conscientiousness. Public self-conscientiousness meant that some people felt the need to respond to e-mails quickly so they could enhance their outward self-image as a person who was always on top of things (Barber & Santuzzi, 2015). The cause of Public self-conscientiousness may have been due to Barber and Santuzzi being more focused on personality factors rather than psychological identification or attitudes toward an individual’s work. Barber and Santuzzi concluded that job involvement and organizational commitment, in particular, were relevant factors that might be associated with workplace telepressure.

In their second study, Barber and Santuzzi’s (2015) goal was threefold (a) confirm the factor structure results for the revised six-item measure by using a new sample, (b) explore additional personal environment factors (i.e., job involvement and affective commitment) and work environment factors (i.e., information and communication technology work demands) associated with workplace telepressure, and (c) examine the criterion-related validity for workplace telepressure with respect to stress, recovery, and e-mail responding behavior outcomes. Approximately 1 year after Study 1, Barber and Santuzzi recruited participants used in Study 2 through Amazon's Mechanical Turk. Respondents from the previous studies did not participate. Barber and Santuzzi collected sample data from 303 participants who reported on the frequency of responding to electronic communications during the week, weekends, vacation days, and sick days. Barber and Santuzzi determined several outcomes of too much telepressure. Those outcomes included both physical and mental burnout. Barber and Santuzzi found that participants who focused on responding to electronic communications were more likely to miss work for health reasons, had poorer sleep quality, and were hurting their productivity. Some participants agreed that they became fixated on looking as if they were busy working instead of tackling larger, important work tasks. Telepressure was found to influence those factors beyond the contribution of other work-related stressful factors such as having a highly demanding job. The study did not find a strong link between telepressure and an employee's personality; instead, workplace norms seemed to predict the state.

In a final analysis, e-mail, text messages, mobile, and other technological devices are indispensable from our daily work environment and are frequently used to get tasks done. Changing communication patterns and a reduction of spatial and temporal constraints have been found to improve the integration of work and family life (Battard & Mangematin, 2013) and to increase people's productivity at work (Grant, Wallace, & Spurgeon, 2013). Despite these advantages, organizational concerns emerged from psychological and physical health costs of information and communication technology use in the long term (Thomas, 2014). Due to intensified expectations of workers availability, employees often felt an urge to use work-related information and communication technology in their nonwork time (Duxbury et al., 2014). The status of being continuously connected and potentially contactable anywhere at any time led to ongoing thinking about information and communication technology messages and an overcoming need to respond to it (Barber & Santuzzi, 2015).

A demonstration of the urge to respond led to a lack of boundary creation between work and nonwork did not exist up to now (Barber & Jenkins, 2014). Staying connected at all times negatively prejudiced several crucial recovery processes, namely an individuals' capacity to psychologically detach from work and the quality of sleep (Barber & Jenkins, 2014; Foucreault, Ollier-Malaterre, & Menard, 2016). A variety of research had shown that impaired recovery led to emotional and physical health complications often reflected in taking off sick days, high absenteeism, or work disability at the organizational level (Good et al., 2016). A previous study found that mindfulness, the effect of a state of conscious awareness to the present, could facilitate psychological detachment after work and thereby improve an individual's recovery (Good et al., 2016). Individual recovery could be the underpinning for the effective execution of flexible work initiatives in organizations. Another contribution was to assimilate the idea of mindfulness into the recovery process by exploring the potential role of mindfulness against protective work-related beliefs (Sutcliffe, Vogus, & Dane, 2016). According to Good et al. (2016), their study linked the awareness of mindful attention to social and emotional competence. Meanwhile, the way employees react and respond to the constant contact of electronic communications has continued to emerge (Mellner, 2016; Wright et al., 2014).

Psychological Availability and Well-Being

Researchers (Derks et al., 2014; Mazmanian et al., 2013) have considerably studied the relationship between information and communication technology and work-life balance, and its' effect on an individual's psychological availability. Evidence suggested that employees often felt the need to be continuously connected to the workplace through the use of information and communication technologies to meet the needs of supervisors, clients, and even colleagues. Being continuously connected is a phenomenon Mazmanian et al. referred to as the autonomy paradox. Other researchers (Boswell et al., 2016; Derks et al., 2014) asserted that the continuous connection to one's work increased employee stress by not allowing employees to take a substantial break from work. Forty-four percent of Americans reported checking their e-mail daily during vacation, and 54% checked e-mail even while home sick (American Psychological Association, 2013). A quantitative study by Mellner (2016) relayed stories of high after-hours availability expectations, high frequency of work-related smartphone use, and low boundary control associated with poor psychological detachment. The concept of psychological detachment, introduced by Etzion, Eden, and Lapidot (1998), refers to when an individual momentarily and mentally does not disengage from their work during nonwork hours. Not being able to psychologically detach during off-job times indicates continual preoccupation with on-the-job issues, which hinders the recovery process (Sonnentag, Arbeus, Mahn, & Fritz, 2014). Boswell et al. (2016) and Kossek et al. (2014) expressed that a continued lack of work-life balance that comes from being available at all times can eventually affect workers' health and psychological well-being.

Individual well-being was an important consideration for employers and policy makers and has increasingly been the focal point of workplace studies (Derks et al., 2014; Sonnentag et al., 2014). Derks et al. (2014) believed well-being to be a construct that encompassed multiple domains, such as physical and psychological well-being, relationships with others, experiences with work, outlook on life, and emotional state. Derks et al. found an association between positive well-being and an individual's ability to achieve self-actualization, to be engaged in their work productively and creatively, to develop meaningful relationships, and to participate in important ways in their community.

Van Steenbergen and Ellemers (2011) found that a meaningful relationship existed between work-life balance and well-being. The author's study demonstrated that work-life imbalance had a negative effect on employee well-being and that work-life balance had a positive effect on employee well-being. A substantive finding from this study was that conflict in the work domain had a positive correlation with indicators of poor health such as cholesterol levels, body mass index, and an individual' physical stamina. Van Steenbergen and Ellemers reported that organizations observed less absenteeism due to sickness, better job performance, and employees with better physical health when they were proactive in the facilitation and mitigation conflict from work-life imbalance.

Synthesis of the Literature

Research up to now has a probing question that asks what it is about staying online at all times to the workplace, outside of normal work hours that is particularly problematic (Boswell et al., 2016; Butts et al., 2015). Mellner (2016) conducted an extensive literature review and recommended the need for further research on conducting more qualitative studies to understand whether non-boundary work actually involved working anytime and anywhere. For employees that ended up being in the on mode and had trouble changing, the question is, how does being always on affect sleep, recovery, and well-being? Mellner also suggested that a qualitative study approach would fill the gap in knowledge regarding the causal mechanisms that are involved in an always on affiliation and the direction in which they work. Mellner reported that the study's approach would include the relationships between new technology-enabled working methods and the implications for employees' ability to achieve psychological detachment and subsequent sleep, recovery, and well-being. A qualitative study could benefit the fields of management, leadership, and organizational change by identifying the effects of work-related electronic communication behavior, after-hours availability, and resulting effects.

The research questions were espoused through the critical review of existing literature on work-related after-hours availability, information and communication technology, and psychological implications. The research questions that guided this research study were, “what are the lived experiences of professional workers with constant pressure to monitor and immediately respond to electronic communications after-hours for work-related purposes and “how does after-hours availability impact work-life balance?” Conceptually, boundary and border theory were employed to underpin this study to achieve the research objectives.

The literature review of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study included an examination of meaningful studies that explored concepts that informed the impact of work-related electronic communication behavior outside of normal working hours (Wright et al., 2014). The literature review also included information communication technologies, such as e-mail, cell phones, smartphones, and personal digital assistants, employees used to stay connected to work even when not formally logged-on during working hours (Derks & Bakker, 2014; Mazmanian et al., 2013; Williams et al., 2014). The examples shown through the existing studies did not adequately evaluate the relevant nuances established with understanding the lived experiences of professional workers near Washington, DC.

The majority of recent research studies on the topic of work-life balance, electronic communications use during nonwork time, and after-hours availability have been quantitative (Butts et al., 2015; Kossek, 2016; Wright et al., 2014) or mixed methods (Mellner et al., 2014; Williams et al., 2014). Two qualitative studies completed on the research topic of after-hours electronic work communication and the implications of mobile electronic communication included a population of professional workers and contributed to the understanding of autonomy in the professional workplace and the influence of electronic communications (Boswell et al., 2016; Mazmanian et al., 2013). The Boswell et al. and Mazmanian et al. studies did little to contribute to the body of knowledge in management, leadership, and organizational change other than to emphasize issues related to e-mails such as challenges of handling messages in large volumes and related stress (Mellner, 2016).

Collectively, the strengths inherent of the key concepts are that employees may develop some level of fulfillment from being continuously connected after normal working hours, resulting in moderating the perceived work-related stress of the phenomenon. A comprehensive analysis of the inherent weaknesses of the key concepts are the unintended consequences of the perceived work-related stress associated with the intrusion and disruption of the nonwork domain. The aim of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to extend the body of knowledge and help in filling the gap in the literature by making the following contributions:

1. Expand upon two studies: the Derks et al. (2015) quantitative study that examined the moderating effects of smartphone use and daily work-home interference and the Boswell et al., 2016 qualitative study that examined why some employees opted to stay connected and engaged in work-related correspondence after-hours;
2. Advance scientific knowledge base by focusing on the understudied population of employees near Washington, DC;

3. Add to the current literature base on work-related electronic communication behavior outside of normal working hours;
4. Focus on professional workers' perceived work-life balance and well-being.

In sum, understanding the phenomenon and the expectations of professional workers' availability to respond to work-related electronic communications during nonworking hours immediately may assist human resources professionals in the development of future performance improvement interventions that enable supervisors to better support and manage electronic communications behavior.

Summary and Conclusions

The purpose of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to address the research gap and describe the lived experiences of professional workers near Washington, DC that coped with constant pressure to monitor and respond to electronic communications in an immediate way during nonwork hours for work-related purposes. Chapter 2 included a general introduction to work-life balance through the concept of boundary and border theory. This chapter also included definitions of terms that were generally used by scholarly researchers and a review of literature related to boundary and border theory exploring lines of demarcation that overviews integration and segmentation about work and nonwork domains. Other areas covered in this chapter included information and communication technology, flexible work arrangements and telepressure. Based on a review of the literature, many gaps in knowledge still exist due to a lack of an expanded range of research on working professionals concerning electronic communication behavior, the balance of work and nonwork, and the swift origination of technology that is outpacing development (Boswell et al., 2016; Butts et al., 2015).

Numerous organizations have moved towards mobile information and communication technologies, such as laptops, smartphones, personal digital assistants, and tablets to aid after-hour availability and increasing blurring the roles of work and nonwork domains (Carrigan & Duberley, 2013; Mazmanian et al., 2013; Senarathne Tennakoon et al., 2013). Ashforth et al. (2000) argued that rather than move toward integration, practical norms for integration and segmentation both persist even in the face of societal and workplace changes. Allen et al. (2014) assessed that much of the research that exists on boundary theory was prompted by new ways of working and the changing of technology, although noted in the literature was the proliferation of new practices that cultivated integration of boundary management. Allen et al. also saw practices that reinforced traditional workplace norms.

This qualitative research study added to the body of literature and advanced the scientific knowledge base in the fields of management, leadership and organizational change by extending prior research on work-related information and communication technology use during nonworking hours. Also, this research study added to the body of knowledge and helped to fill a gap in the existing literature by focusing on an understudied population of professional workers that coped with continual burden to monitor and immediately respond to electronic communications after regular scheduled work hours. The previous literature, as outlined in this chapter, on the research topics showed that work-life balance, electronic communications use during nonwork time, and after-hours availability appeared to be a highly relevant phenomenon for organizations (Derks & Bakker, 2014; Hislop et al., 2013). Research in the area of work-life balance, electronic communications use during nonwork time, and after-hours availability has significance due to its importance to the psychological implications and well-being of the professional worker (Wright et al., 2014).

Chapter 3 contains an analysis of the qualitative research method and the rationale for the application of a transcendental phenomenological research design and includes a description of the data analysis plan using the modified van Kaam method (Moustakas, 1994). Additional sections include research procedures, the rationale for the research method and design in comparison with other designs, the role of the researcher, methodology plans, and trustworthiness, transferability, conformability, credibility, dependability, ethical concerns, and the summary.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the lived experiences of professional workers near Washington, DC who coped with continual pressure to monitor and respond to electronic communications in an immediate way during nonwork hours. Emergent technologies is the driving force that helps shape expectations and demands in the changing workplace. Emergent technologies were designed to enhance individual and organizational potential (Mellner, 2016). Information and communication technology provides access to work and connection at all times (Mazmanian et al., 2013). Constant connectivity to the workplace might lead to employee satisfaction issues, high turnover, and absenteeism in the organization (Kossek, 2016). The phenomenon of work anytime and anywhere during nonwork time is increasing (Mazmanian et al., 2013). Recent research showed that information and communication technologies make it possible for employees to remain connected to the workplace while not located in the workplace (Boswell et al., 2016). The constant use of information and communication technologies has blurred the boundaries between work and home (Boswell et al., 2016).

In Chapter 3, I discuss the method of research, the rationale for the design, and the appropriateness of a qualitative phenomenological method. I describe the study population, sampling framework, data collection, and data analysis. The chapter ends with a discussion of the instruments for data collection.

Research Design and Rationale

Two research questions guided the design of this transcendental phenomenological study: What are the lived experiences of professional workers with constant pressure to monitor and immediately respond to electronic communications after-hours for work-related purposes? How does after-hours availability affect work-life balance? Selecting a research design is a multifaceted process. The design informs how the purpose will be fulfilled and research questions answered (Moustakas, 1994; Vagle, 2014).

While quantitative researchers use an instrument to collect data, qualitative researchers use the study's researcher as the instrument (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). The intent in qualitative research is for the researcher to collect data and conduct data analysis as the primary instrument (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2013). Quantitative research is deductive and is used to test hypotheses with numerical data in contrast to qualitative data, which includes pictures and words. A quantitative method would not have been appropriate because relationships between variables and numerical evaluation (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2013) did not align with the purpose of this study.

Qualitative methodology is preferred when trying to comprehend social or cultural phenomena (Astalin, 2013; Moustakas, 1994; Schwandt, 2015), while efforts to understand data based on objective methods is a quantitative approach (Astalin, 2013). A qualitative method is useful for researchers concerned with exploring meaning, purpose, and the significance of things (Schwandt, 2015). The qualitative method was appropriate for this study because the results may aide in the review of social issues according to the experiences of participants (Schwandt, 2015).

The five types of qualitative research designs include narrative, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and descriptive research/case study (Marshall & Rossman, 2015). According to Moustakas (1994), phenomenological research addresses the essence of an experience through analysis of meaningful statements. Phenomenological researchers collect data like other qualitative researchers (Collins & Cooper, 2014). However, grounded theory researchers collect data and form a hypothesis after data collection (Cho & Lee, 2014; Timmermans & Tavory, 2012). Grounded theory researchers pursue the development of a theory, which is the most regularly used design in qualitative research (Cho & Lee, 2014; Timmermans & Tavory, 2012). The case study approach was not appropriate because the plan was not to study an event, program, or activity but rather to study the experiences of the participants. A review of grounded theory, narrative, ethnographic, and case study designs indicated none of them were appropriate for this study.

There are several methods for organizing and analyzing data in a phenomenological study. Descriptive research is useful for obtaining information about attitudes, naturally occurring behavior, or characteristics of subjects or groups (Giorgi, 2012). Creating descriptions from participants’ responses and interpreting data is the focus of transcendental (psychological) phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994). The qualitative research method and transcendental phenomenological design were appropriate for this study because the aim was to describe the lived experiences and not to create a new theory of social phenomena (see Moustakas, 1994; Schwandt, 2015).

Role of the Researcher

Like other types of research, qualitative research has an array of specialized types involving engagement in a continual experience with participants (Moustakas, 1994; Sutton & Austin, 2015). In a transcendental phenomenological study, the researcher's role is to serve as a participatory respondent or primary instrument throughout the study (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). In the role of participatory respondent, I attempted to develop common ground with participants so that their lived experiences could be told through their stories (see Moustakas, 1994). Additional roles were to identify and interview participants, capture the thoughts and feelings of participants, analyze data (see Kyvik, 2013; Moustakas, 1994; Sutton & Austin, 2015), and safeguard the participants and their data (Sutton & Austin, 2015). In alignment with a phenomenological design, I engaged in the process of epoché before conducting any interviews. Epoché is another name for bracketing in which a researcher sets aside personal biases that could potentially affect the research process (Moustakas, 1994). I aimed to understand the participants' experiences to achieve phenomenological reduction, as the researcher (Moustakas, 1994; Vagle, 2014). Consistent with Moustakas's recommendations, Padilla-Diaz (2015) suggested that researchers bracket their opinions regarding the phenomenon. Bracketing can enable researchers to be present in the experience free from bias that could compromise the integrity of the study (Gergen, 2014; Moustakas, 1994). Setting aside biases was important to explore the perceptions of professional workers.

Interviews are a key source of data collection in qualitative research (Jamshed, 2014). Interviews produce usable data if the interview questions draw information about the phenomenon under review (Maxwell, 2013; Miles et al., 2014). Because one of the roles of a researcher is to be the key instrument in the data collection process (Moustakas, 1994), capturing the participants’ views and opinions accurately during interviews was essential to this study. To elicit rich responses from participants, Bevan (2014) suggested that it may be beneficial for novice researchers to become familiar with the process of effective interviewing and active listening to understand the art of descriptive phenomenological interviewing. Developing effective interviewing skills may help the interviewer understand how to stimulate participants in revealing honest perceptions and opinions about the phenomenon (Bevan, 2014).

Methodology

The methodology section includes a description of the recruiting and selecting process, pilot study, instruments developed for the study, methods of triangulation, and participation. I conclude with an account of the procedures for data collection and analysis. Figure 4 is a depiction of the methodology process.

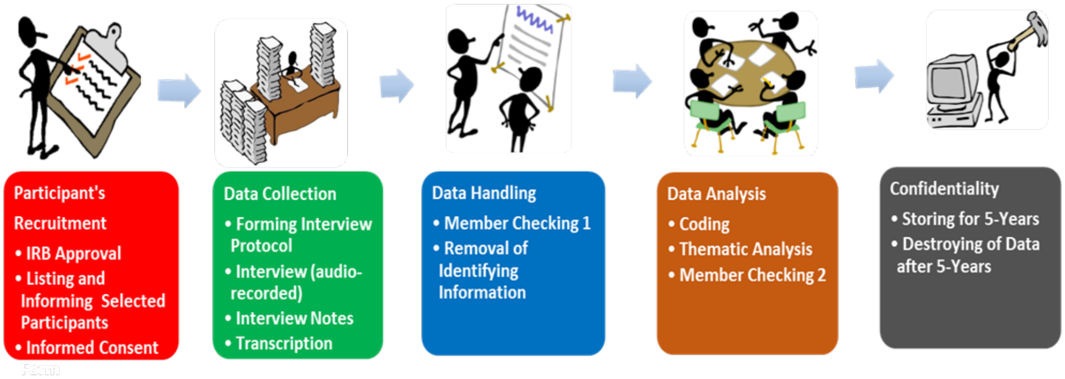

Participant's Recruitment
• IRB Approval
• Listing and Informing Selected Participants
• Informed Consent Form
Data Collection
• Forming Interview Protocol
• Interview (audio-recorded)
• Interview Notes
• Transcription
Data Handling
• Member Checking 1
• Removal of Identifying Information
Data Analysis
• Coding
• Thematic Analysis
• Member Checking 2
Confidentiality
• Storing for 5-Years
• Destroying of Data after 5-Years

Figure 4. Research process flow.

Participant Selection Logic

The research goal to sample 15-20 male and female professional workers was achieved with a final sample size of 16 professional workers near Washington, DC. A fundamental expectation in phenomenological research is to select participants who have experienced the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994; Vagle, 2014). Participant selection criteria included participants who were working as professional workers at the time of the study or had worked as a professional worker within the past 5 years and had the option to telework at least 1 day a week. The participants for this study worked for various agencies and were at least 18 years old.

Contrary to quantitative research, rules regarding the sample size are flexible in qualitative research (Miles et al., 2014). Walden University's standards outlined in the Ph.D. rubric suggested a sample size of at least 20 participants. In phenomenological studies, the phenomenon is more important than the sample size (Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013). Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2013) contended that the sample size of interviewed participants could vary. Researchers should seek data saturation, which occurs when no new data are discovered from participants (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Van Manen, 2014).

Researchers enhance the quality of the study by choosing an appropriate sample size to reach data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Van Manen, 2014). Determining the sample size before selecting participants helps to ensure the establishment of a capable sample size (Marshall et al., 2013). Based on the context and the phenomenon under review, some researchers conducting phenomenological studies reach saturation with a sample as small as 10 participants (Prendergast & Maggie, 2013) while other need as many as 20 participants (Marshall et al., 2013). Researchers cannot assume that they obtained data saturation because they reached their predetermined sample size (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Data saturation is not about the numbers, but about the depth of the data (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Van Manen, 2014).

For this study, I used purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is an appropriate sampling method for researchers conducting qualitative studies to identify participants who are most knowledgeable about the research topic (Palinkas et al., 2015). Purposive sampling differs from random sampling because the choice of participants is based on the participants' lived experiences of the phenomenon under study (Cleary, Horsfall, & Hayter, 2014; Moustakas, 1994).

The sample of participants came from the civilian career occupations of professional workers. This group of participants included managers and other leaders in the federal workforce. I used purposive sampling and snowball sampling to obtain referrals from other participants. If purposive sampling did not provide a suitable sample size (Martinez-Mesa, Gonzalez-Chica, Duquia, Bonamigo, & Bastos, 2016) to reach data saturation, I employed snowball sampling to obtain additional participants. Snowball sampling is a strategy based on the suggestion of participants from other qualified participants (Palinkas et al., 2015). This strategy can be used to identify more candidates who meet the study's selection criteria. Requesting suggestions from other participants is similar to a rolling snowball when recruiting participants for data collection to ensure data saturation (Miles et al., 2014; Van Manen, 2014).

Instrumentation

A qualitative transcendental phenomenological design (see Giorgi, 2012; Moustakas, 1994) was the approach used to report on the lived experiences of professional workers. One of the roles of a qualitative researcher is to serve as a key instrument in data collection (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). Harvey (2015) and Miles et al. (2014) suggested using multiple sources of instruments such as interviews, member checks, and field notes to collect data on a single object. I used multiple sources of data collection to ensure data triangulation and support the credibility of this study (see Harvey, 2015; Miles et al., 2014; Moustakas, 1994). In-depth interviews with intermediate- to upper-level employees with diverse backgrounds helped me understand the perceptions of professional workers regarding the phenomenon of after-hours availability expectations.

A principal data collection instrument for phenomenological research is the interview (Schwandt, 2015; Vagle, 2014; van Manen, 2014). Developing an interview protocol is logical when establishing a pragmatic approach to a qualitative study

(Hoffding & Martiny, 2016). Miles et al. (2014) added that when the phenomenon under study is set within a specific context and when expressing the concepts through location-specific terms and meanings, it is also practical to develop an interview protocol. To aid with note-taking, I used an appropriate researcher-developed interview protocol (see Appendix A) constructed for the collection of primary data (see Magnusson & Marecek, 2015).

The purpose of the interview protocol was to keep the focus on the participants and the scope of the study (Magnusson & Marecek, 2015). Remaining focused on the participants' experiences of the phenomenon during interviews mitigated researcher bias and enhance content validity (Giorgi, 2012; Vagle, 2014). With the interview protocol, the intent was to answer the research questions using semistructured open-ended interview questions (Schwandt, 2015). I used semistructured open-ended interview questions to facilitate responses of rich, detailed data that addressed the research questions. The facilitation of open-ended interview questions allowed me to obtain thick and rich accounts of the phenomenon (Schwandt, 2015) of after-hours availability expectations to provide a thorough and complete explanation of the research questions.

Using the modified version of the van Kaam method in the data analysis process required reengagement with participants as part of the 7-step process of member validation (Moustakas, 1994). Participants reviewed the interview data to verify that the study reflected the accuracy of the essence of their perspectives and experiences. If a participant had disagreed, I would have integrated any missing or misinterpreted information (Harvey, 2015; Moustakas, 1994) within Chapter 4. Within the modified van

Kaam method of analysis, this validation process is referred to as member checking (Moustakas, 1994). Member checking is a technique, that can be employed to validate the rich, thick descriptions of the phenomenon from participants (Harvey, 2015; Moustakas, 1994; Myers, 2013). In addition to member checking, I assembled written field notes from the interview sessions that helped support trustworthiness (Harvey, 2015; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this current study, participants did not engage in transcript verification to explore any gaps in the results or similarities and reflect on the information they shared concerning interpretations of the findings that may generate additional data and insight (Grossoehme, 2014; Thomas, 2017).

Pilot Study

Magnusson and Marecek (2015) recommended conducting a pilot study to test the adequacy of research instruments to be used in the main study. Recruitment for two volunteer test participants for the pilot study (see Appendix B) took place, after the receipt of Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval number 09-18-18-0012184, expiration of September 17, 2018. The test participants came from the same criterion group as the main study participants and helped test the adequacy of the interview protocol (Magnusson & Marecek, 2015). Participant recruitment followed all of the same processes as the main study. A consent form was used before conducting the interviews in the same manner as the main study (Magnusson & Marecek, 2015).

The test participants background was comparable to the main study participants' background. Next, test participants had experienced/or were experiencing persistent pressure to observe and immediately respond to electronic communications and receive work-related contact often after normal working hours. Once the interviews were complete, a feedback session took place with the test participants to discuss the elimination of any unnecessary questions and added any additional relevant questions and information (Magnusson & Marecek, 2015). Equally important was to sequence the questions for relevance and decide if the process needed improvement (Liu, 2018; Maxwell, 2013).

By conducting a pilot study, I had a chance to make sure the guidelines were easy to understand, that the questions served the intended purpose, and the pilot interviews helped to shape interviewing skills (Orsmond & Cohn, 2015). The expectation was for test participants to provide feedback that would warrant the appropriateness of the interview questions to the research questions and ultimately address the research problem, and validate the method of analysis. The data analysis process involved the use of the modified van Kaam method to guide the development of making meaning of professional workers' experiences (Elo et al., 2014). A purposive, rolling snowball sample followed the pilot study to start recruiting for the main study.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Recruitment. The use of social media (Topolovec-Vranic & Natarajan, 2016) and the use of a multi-source strategy (Subbaraman, Laudet, Ritter, Stunz, & Kaskutas, 2015) are effective tools for the recruitment of participants for data collection. With the IRB's approval, the recruitment of participants for the main research study took place. The recruitment of potential participants came from sending personal e-mails and text messaging to contacts that met the criteria, networking with professional associates, and using snowball sampling methods. In addition to the possible use of social media, the focus was to place recruitment flyers (see Appendix C) where consent was not required. The intent was to recruit 15-20 professional government workers that contended with organizational pressure using a smartphone or laptop continuously for business reasons by making themselves available beyond their regularly scheduled work-hours. The recruitment flyer addressed the purpose of the study, contained researcher contact information, eligibility requirements, and other relevant data. The plan was to capitalize on reputable professional associations to recruit qualified participants.

Participation. Qualitative research has adaptable parameters for selecting sample sizes as opposed to quantitative research, which is more bound by a set of rules (Elo et al., 2014; Miles et al., 2014). The men and women of the targeted population/sample either worked or had worked in an agency where they felt the need to log back into work and responded to electronic communications after normal working hours for work-related purposes. Participants that met the criteria received a formal invitation through e-mail after receiving IRB approval to conduct this research study. The informed consent included the invitation to participate. The consent form was approved by the IRB, in accordance with the guidelines of Walden University, and contained information regarding the participant's voluntary support of this study. When I failed to reach data saturation such as too few participant volunteers, participant recruitment continued through purposive sampling and the snowball sampling method based on referrals from other participants. There were interviews from a selection of 16 participants until reaching data saturation and until themes became repetitious and no new information was identified (Elo et al., 2014). Participants received information on the next steps and received assurance on the protection of their data in accordance with ethical standards (Vayena & Tasioulas, 2013). Participants received an explanation for any follow-up procedures that were necessary such as to authenticate data collected.

Data collection. Data collection began after approval was attained from the IRB and the participants signed a consent form. The purpose of the data collection was to collect data by conducting one-on-one, semistructured, in-depth interviews using open-ended questions, member checks, and an analysis of field notes (Jamshed, 2014) to answer the following research questions (Miles et al., 2014).

RQ1: What are the lived experiences of professional workers with constant pressure to monitor and immediately respond to electronic communications after hours for work purposes?

RQ2: How does after-hours availability affect work-life balance?

For this study and with the participants' consent, I used a digital audio recorder to record interviews and used a professional transcription company (Appendix D) to produce verbatim transcriptions of the interview sessions. The plan for conducting the in-depth semistructured interviews was by telephone. Semistructured, in-depth interviews were used considerably as an interviewing format possibly as one-on-one or sometimes with a group (Sutton & Austin, 2015). The frequency of data collection for these types of interview sessions are to conduct interviews once with the individual and may cover 30 minutes to more than an hour in duration (Onwuegbuzie & Byers, 2014). Onwuegbuzie and Byers expressed that the expectation is of a one-time occurrence per participant for the frequency of data collection and that participants not exceed 90 minutes answering the questions. A request for the participant's permission to record the interview session using voice recording, while also transcribing or taking hand-written field notes, was on file with the participants' consent form for inclusion with this study (Cridland, Jones, Caputi, & Magee, 2015). After the interview, participants received a debriefing and information regarding scheduling of the follow-up session, to telephonically discuss the summary review of the interview. As Cridland et al. (2015) suggested, a follow-up session with participants was a critical component that reflected the participants' experiences from the interview and was treated as a data collection method.

Data Analysis Plan

After data collection, organization and analysis of data began. There are numerous approaches for managing, organizing, and analyzing data in a qualitative phenomenological study, which includes thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2016; Vaughn & Turner, 2016). Data analysis for this qualitative transcendental phenomenological research study followed the 7-step process of Moustakas's (1994) modification of the van Kaam method, which emphasized the essence of the lived experience. Moustakas's modified van Kaam method is a hand-coding method that I used to analyze each participant's transcription of the interview responses. Moustakas's modification of the van Kaam method allowed the essence of the phenomenon and the description of the meaning of the phenomenon to reflect the entirety of the study participants experiences (Moustakas, 1994). The 7-step process used is as follows: (a) listing and grouping, (b) reduction and elimination, (c) clustering and thematizing, (d) validation, (e) individual textual description, (f) individual structural description, and (g) textural-structural description. Then, Moustakas recommended assembling a composite description that will represent a synthesis of the essence and meanings of the experiences for the total group of professional workers of this study (see Figure 5).

Bevan (2014) reported, to address the research questions, qualitative interviewing should have a purposeful and methodical approach to facilitate the interpretation of participants' lived experiences. The intent was to analyze the participants lived experiences provided through interviewing by applying the 7-step process of the modified van Kaam to each participant (Moustakas, 1994). The digital audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed and worked through the 7-step process. Analyzing data using the modified van Kaam method is a verified process for the identification of searching for themes and patterns in the participants' responses (Moustakas, 1994; Vagle, 2014).

For researchers who find it useful, Vagle (2014) supported the use of analytical software. For this study, data coding consisted of Moustakas's modified van Kaam, hand-coding, 7-step process to analyze participants interview responses. In conjunction with the modified van Kaam method, the use of an appropriate version of a computer assisted qualitative data analysis software program also supported the analysis of the transcribed interviews for this study (Vaughn & Turner, 2016). Vaughn and Turner found that researchers used a diverse selection of qualitative data software packages such as NVivo to organize text data. NVivo is a computer assisted qualitative data analysis software tool that researchers use to analyze interview transcripts to reveal patterns and similar themes from research (QSR International, 2017). A verbatim transcription of each participant's interview data were systematically identified, organized, categorized, and coded (Vaughn & Turner, 2016). Themes and patterns provided a general description of how and what the research participants experienced. As intended, NVivo was used to assist with data analysis for this study. Each participant's transcription went through the same 7-step process. According to Moustakas, data analysis follows a series of 7-steps to identify core themes; then a final analysis of the meanings and essences yield a composite description of the phenomenon (see Figure 5).

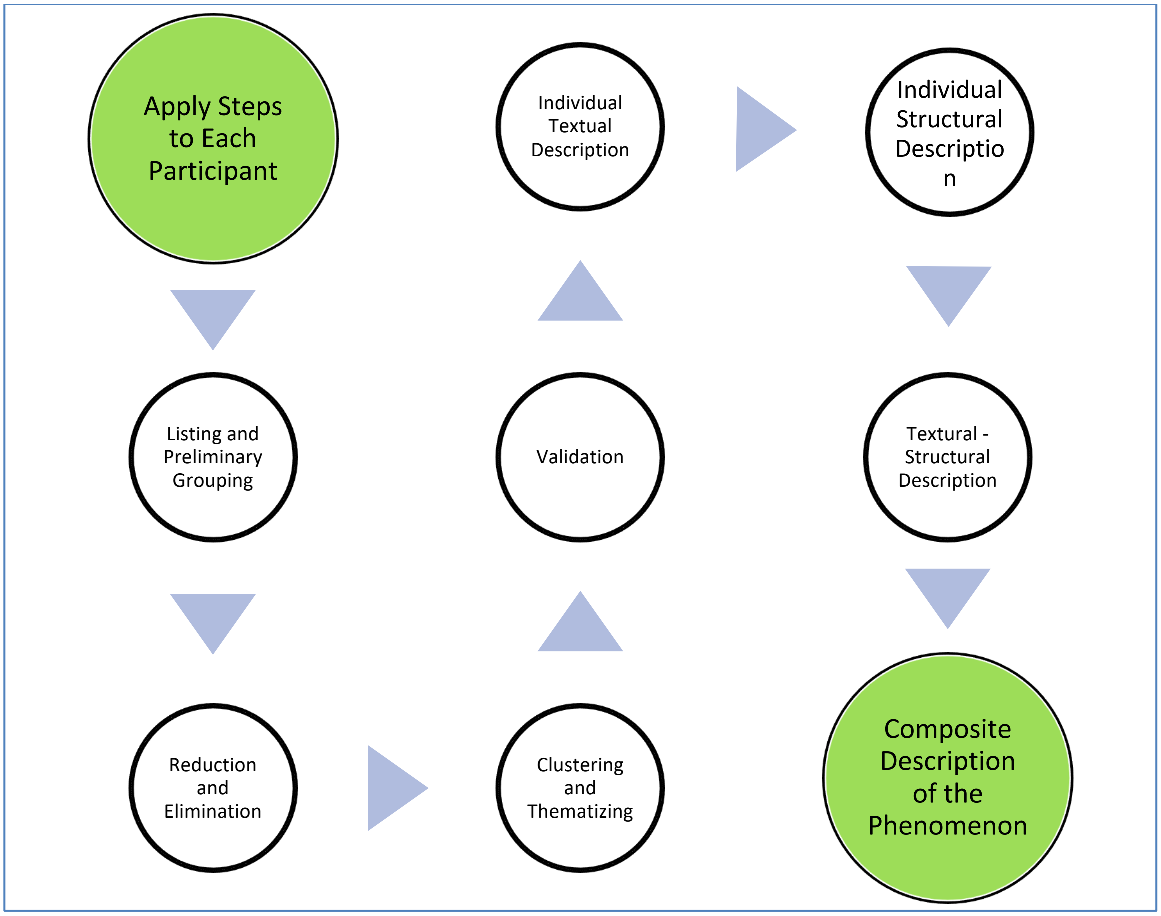

Apply Steps to Each Participant
Listing and Preliminary Grouping
Reduction and Elimination
Clustering and Thematizing
Validation
Individual Textual Description
Individual Structural Descriptio n
Textural - Structural Description
Composite Description of the Phenomenon

Figure 5. Moustakas's modified van Kaam method.

There were not any discrepant cases; there would have been an acceptable alternative in accounting for discrepancies in the results (Glaser & Laudel, 2013). Glaser and Laudel maintained that discrepant cases are data that offer deviation of the perspective on the phenomenon under investigation. Research participants received an explanatory e-mail and invitation to review and clarify any edits made from the interpretations of the transcripts.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Experts agree that the trustworthiness or truth of the findings of qualitative data and content analysis is often manifested by using terms such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability from data collection to reporting of the results (Elo et al., 2014; Konradsen, Kirkevold, & Olson, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Listed in the next section is a description of the appropriateness of each of the four terms.

Credibility

Harvey (2015) and Lincoln and Guba (1985) favored member checking as a critical technique for establishing credibility. The use of member checking gave participants of my study an opportunity to verify and critique or confirm the accuracy of the interpretation of their responses (Harvey, 2015; Johnson, 2015; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). There are also other techniques a researcher can use to assure credibility such as persistent observations, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, referential adequacy, and prolonged engagement (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Morse, 2015). Prolonged engagement between a participant and a researcher provides an opportunity for both to gain a suitable understanding, confidence in the truth of the findings, and establishes a relationship of trust during the study (Hays, Wood, Dahl, & Kirk-Jenkins, 2016; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

From the perspective of establishing credibility, I ensured that the participants were identified and described accurately (Koelsch, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To further establish credibility, I used a multidimensional view of data to help inform a more accurate view of the phenomenon; several studies (Harvey, 2015; Miles et al., 2014; Myers, 2013) referred to this technique as triangulation. I achieved triangulation by data source through semistructured interviews, field notes with researcher reflexivity, a pilot study, and literature mapping.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the degree to which the research findings present enough generalized details from one situation to another (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles et al., 2014). Transferability means that the findings of the research should be applicable in other research settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; van Manen, 2014). Research studies met the criteria of transferability when readers related the findings with their experiences (Cope, 2014). I provided detailed descriptions of the participants' demographic data which included age ranges, gender, service grade, government position, years in the current position, and education level to increase transferability; but, the nature of a transcendental phenomenological study bounds the transferability to similar participants and usually are not transferable to other populations (Miles et al., 2014).

Dependability

Dependability is what Houghton, Casey, Shaw, and Murphy (2013) claimed the stability or replicability of data over time. The stability of data repeatedly given, under different conditions, and showing the consistency of the findings is how Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Elo et al. (2014) described dependability. Dependability also raises the concern of member checking or respondent validation, as such a need may arise to go back to the participant to verify that the findings are dependable (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016). I achieved the process of dependability by triangulating data collection sources that included interviews, a pilot study, literature mapping, and field notes (Harvey, 2015; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles et al., 2014). Additionally, to increase dependability, I developed research questions relevant to a phenomenological research study and conducted member checks (Birt et al., 2016; Miles et al., 2014).

Confirmability

Confirmability relates to the objectivity and refers to the accuracy or authentic reflections of participants' perspectives without unrecognized researcher biases interfering with the findings (Houghton et al., 2013; Moustakas, 1994). As suggested by Hoover and Morrow (2015), I kept a journal of field notes during the interview process, to reflect on the concept of the study and the development of themes from analysis to minimize threats to confirmability. As the interviewer, keeping a journal was also a method I used to address and bracket my biases (Moustakas, 1994; Overgaard, 2015).

Ethical Procedures

Ethical procedures in research are in place to protect the rights of research participants (Vayena & Tasioulas, 2013). Walden University requires researchers conducting human science research projects to receive training through the National Institute of Health (NIH) (see Appendix E). I completed the NIH Human Subjects Protection Training Module to meet the requirement as part of the preparation to complete this research study. I obtained approval from Walden University IRB pertaining to the requirement, before any data collection. The IRB approval number and the accompanying expiration date is: 09-18-18-0012184, expires on September 17, 2019. The IRB is responsible for assessing the potential risks and benefits to participants. Walden University's IRB additionally protects the well-being of participants by providing oversight of student research. Walden University's IRB oversight measures aligned with other research recommendations for conducting human science research and identified the need to protect participants' confidentiality (Morse & Coulehan, 2015; Vayena & Tasioulas, 2013). The IRB ensured the informed consent met ethical requirements and confirmed the proficiency and credibility of researchers (Vayena & Tasioulas, 2013). I used an informed consent document, which provided background information about the study to gain access to participants (Hallett, 2013).

Each participant received an informed consent form I developed (Appendix B). The consent form outlines the participants' rights throughout the research process (Rock & Hoebeke, 2014). Participants were able to reference the consent form as a reminder of the purpose of the study, the data collection, and management procedures, and that their participation in this study was voluntary and non-compensable (Miles et al., 2014). Participants understood that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Volunteers who agreed to participate in the study acknowledged in writing that they understood the intent of the study and that they consented to participate.

The design of this research study was to provide acceptable requirements for the confidentiality of all participants in this study per Walden University's IRB Guidelines. Each participant received assurance of their anonymity through the removal of identifying information; there were not any identifiable features that link to the participants (Haahr, Norlyk, & Hall, 2014).

Files from the interview recordings and electronic data from this study were password-protected. I will maintain access and I will retain on a password-protected computer, external hard drive, and backup file for 5 years. Paper data collection is also stored in a locked, fire-retardant container. After 5 years, I will shred paper data, erase electronic data, and delete audio data (Goldberg & Allen, 2015).

Involvement with the participants can present a range of ethical and personal issues for the study's researcher (Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman, 2013). Nunan and Yenicioglu (2013) recommended following the informed consent process to avoid the possibility of any ethical dilemmas (Hallett, 2013). Following the guidelines of Walden University's IRB certainly helped to maintain anonymity and confidentiality, and ensure the protection of the participants' privacy.

Summary

The purpose of Chapter 3 was to provide a detailed description of the research methodology for this study. This chapter covered the plan used to conduct this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study. The aim of the study was to support why a transcendental phenomenological approach was an appropriate design to describe the lived experiences of professional workers near Washington, DC that coped with constant pressure to monitor and immediately respond to electronic communications during hours not scheduled to work for work-related purposes. An overview of the details included a researcher's role, the participant selection process, a description of the population, and the data analysis plan. Chapter 3 also included issues of trustworthiness by ensuring the study met the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Chapter 4 includes a presentation and explanation of the study's findings with supporting data of the findings and Chapter 5 includes the conclusions and recommendations of the study.

Chapter 4: Results

I used a transcendental phenomenological design to explore and describe how professional workers managed the continuous pressure to monitor and immediately respond to work-related e-mails and text messages during nonwork hours. I designed this study to explore how a professional workers' electronic communications behavior outside of normal working hours for work-related purposes affected their psychological availability and their ability to achieve balance in their work and nonwork domains. The study was guided by two research questions:

1. RQ1: What are the lived experiences of professional workers with constant pressure to monitor and immediately respond to electronic communications after-hours for work-related purposes?
2. RQ2: How does after-hours availability affect work-life balance?

In this chapter, I provide details of the pilot study that was used for data collection, the research setting, and participant demographics. I also discuss the data collection and data analysis process, evidence of trustworthiness, and the results of the study. The chapter concludes with a summary and transition to Chapter 5.

Pilot Study

Data collection for the pilot study began immediately after receiving approval from the Walden University institutional review board (IRB approval number 09-18-18-0012184). I conducted a pilot study to critique the interview protocol, build my researcher interviewing skills, and establish credibility. The first two participants who responded to the recruitment efforts through purposive and snowball sampling from professional affiliations received an invitation to participate in the study. Pilot study participants agreed to participate and returned the signed informed consents and demographic data sheets through e-mail.

The interview process began with a pilot study of two professional workers, one in project management and one in a supervisory position from an engineering organization. Both of the interviews were conducted by telephone. The pilot study interviews helped me identify difficulties with potentially intrusive questions. Consistency was maintained throughout the pilot study process by following the same interview approach and strategy with both participants. The average duration per interview session during data collection for the pilot study averaged 35 minutes from the participants' feedback and critique.

There were minor word changes to the instrumentation, which improved verbiage to reduce leading questions and presumption. The pilot study with the two professional workers was conducted to test the procedures, give information about the unpredictability of the responses, and test the flow of information before the full study. The pilot study participants gave feedback regarding the confusion, awkwardness, or redundancy of the questions. The pilot study feedback helped me evaluate the alignment of each interview question with the research questions and purpose statement. Modifications resulting from the pilot study included adding the number of days eligible to telework per week to the demographic data sheet. The objective was to establish the amount of time the participant was working outside of regularly scheduled office hours to explore work-life balance data and modify, reword, or combine some questions for clarity and avoidance of repetition.

The minor revisions to the interview protocol did not impact the research questions of the main study. After making minor revisions to the interview protocol during the pilot study, I began participant recruitment for the main study. Responses from the pilot study interviews were not included in the main study results.

Research Setting

The research setting for data gathering consisted of telephone interviews. I offered telephone interviews for the convenience and because it was not practical to travel to each participant due to the geographical dispersion of their locations. By offering telephone interviews, I provided participants an opportunity to contribute to this research study regardless of their location. The telephone interviews supported the facilitation of the participants' interview sessions by providing them a platform to tell their stories with ease. The receipt of the responses telephonically from the participants in these geographically dispersed areas benefited the research efforts by saving time and mileage expenses. Based on the nature of the research setting, I was not able to directly observe any personal or organizational conditions. There were no known changes in personnel, budget cuts, or other circumstances that could have influenced the interpretation of the results or could have influenced the participants at the time of this study.

Demographics

This study involved exploring the perceptions of professional men and women who either work or have worked in positions where they felt the need to log back into work and respond to electronic communications after normal working hours for work-related purposes. I designed a demographic data sheet (see Appendix F) and e-mailed it to potential participants to gather personal background data to determine eligibility for the study. To meet the eligibility criteria for this study, each participant acknowledged that they (a) were working or had worked near Washington, DC; (b) were currently working or had previously worked as an intermediate- to mid-level federal employee within the past 5 years; (c) were at least 18 years of age; and (d) had the option for ad hoc/situational or regular telework at least 1 day a week.

The names of participants and their conforming demographic data were omitted, and participants were assigned an identifying number. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym identification number ranging from MSP1 to MSP16. The assigned pseudonym identification number was for research purposes to safeguard the confidentiality of the participants (Morse & Coulehan, 2015). An overview of participants' demographics is provided in Table 1.

Table 1

Participants' Demographic Overview

Participant	Age Range	Gender	GS Grade	Position	Years in Position	Education
MSP1	46-55	M	14	Cyber Security	4	Master's
MSP2	56-64	F	13	Program Manager	15	Master's
MSP3	46-55	M	14	Program Analyst in Contracting	1	Master's
MSP4	46-55	F	14	Acquisition Team Lead	8	Master's
MSP5	56-64	M	13	Compliance Inspector	14	Bachelor's
MSP6	56-64	F	13	Records Management	10	Master's
MSP7	56-64	F	13	Program Manager in Acquisitions	12	Master's
MSP8	56-64	M	15	Senior Associate Director	2	Doctorate
MSP9	46-55	F	13	Information Technology Specialist	15	Bachelor's
MSP10	46-55	F	14	Financial Management Specialist	12	Bachelor's
MSP11	56-64	M	14	Whistleblower Investigator	1	Master's
MSP12	56-64	F	14	Assessment Manager	11	Master's
MSP13	46-55	M	14	Cyber Security	10	Bachelor's
MSP14	56-64	M	14	Crisis Management Specialist	8	Master's
MSP15	56-64	M	14	Realty Specialist	4	Bachelor's
MSP16	46-55	F	15	Human Resources	13	Master's

Data Collection

Participants were recruited through purposive sampling in conjunction with snowball sampling. Potential participants who were identified to take part in the study were sent invitations embedded in the consent form. Recruitment efforts reached 22 potential participants through e-mail, physical letters, and recruitment flyers. Each participant received a copy of the consent form, a demographic data sheet, and a sampling of the interview questions through e-mail before the interview session.

Four of the remaining 20 potential participants were not able to participate due to work-related scheduling conflicts. Sixteen employees who met the inclusion criteria for the main study received invitations to participate in this transcendental phenomenological study. All of the participants returned signed consent forms and demographic data sheets to me through e-mail before their scheduled interview, or I collected the demographic data over the telephone prior to starting the interview. The interview sessions were scheduled and confirmed during the week of October 1 through October 5, 2018 and again in February 2019. The telephone interview sessions occurred from October 8 through October 12, 2018 and February 23 through February 24, 2019. Participants chose an interview time from a set of proposed dates and times that I reserved for the interviews. Participants were interviewed by telephone as available.

Before and during interviews, I approached each session with an open mind to bracket my experience and understandings and to ensure any biases were set aside to avoid prejudicing the interview responses. Prior to the start of interviews, I expressed appreciation to participants for their participation, reminding them that they could stop the interview at any time, and I provided a brief overview of the study. I used a semistructured interview protocol to guide the interviews (see Appendix A). The interviews began with several minutes of rapport building, followed by a review of the demographic questions. The use of semistructured interviewing allowed for information sharing to capture the lived experiences of the participants. The interview times ranged from 20 to 50 minutes, with an average of 35 minutes. The use of telephone interviewing eliminated costs associated with face-to-face interviewing (Oltmann, 2016).

Before starting the interview, I reminded participants that their interview session would be audio recorded for data collection purposes. A professional transcription company converted the digital recordings to Microsoft Word documents. The participants answered semistructured, open-ended questions based on reflections of their lived experiences as a professional worker. Conducting semistructured interviews helped me place the participants at ease and helped with the extraction of in-depth data. During each recorded interview session, I used an electronic tablet in conjunction with my smartphone. I took handwritten notes during each telephone session and used an electronic tablet to digitally capture an audio recording of each participant to ensure data accuracy. Before each interview, I tested the digital recording application. I relied on the accuracy of the transcription service and used my handwritten notes to cross-reference the responses from the telephone interviews. Transcripts of the audio recorded data were completed within 24 hours of each interview, except for one transcript that was completed in 48 hours.

An interpretation of data commenced with me electronically reviewing the transcripts of the interview responses of the participants. Participants were provided an opportunity to correct and revise information collected within a specified period given. Participants were e-mailed a summarized review of my interpretation of the data and given a specific date to respond. Thirteen participants replied, and three participants did not reply in the time frame given. All of the participants who responded concurred with the transcript. The process of member checking ensured that the collected data were correct and relevant to the study. The data collection plan presented in Chapter 3 aligned with the execution and implementation without any unusual circumstances.

Data Analysis

Organization and analysis of data began after collecting data through phenomenological in-depth interviews with participants who shared experiences of the phenomenon. Participants' data were transcribed into Word documents. Moustakas's 7-step modified van Kaam method of qualitative phenomenological analysis was used to analyze data and to provide textural and structural briefs of the interviews. Moustakas's modified van Kaam procedure is a manual process that contributes to discovering categories and themes (Moustakas, 1994). Data analysis using Moustakas's 7-step process enabled me to gather common categories and to develop the textual description that emerged from the responses. Elements of the 7-step process included the following:

Step 1: Horizonalization: Listing and Preliminary Grouping

After the participants' data were transcribed into Word documents, I used the verbatim transcripts of each participant's response relevant to the question that was asked. I parsed out each response that described an element, or horizon, of the lived experience and ignored responses irrelevant to the phenomena. Moustakas (1994) said that horizonalization is an endless process and that horizons are limitless.

Step 2: Reduction and Elimination

The reduction and elimination process was used to determine the invariant constituents. Each horizon of the lived experience had to meet two requirements:

1. Does the horizon contain an element of the experience that is necessary to understand the experience?
2. Is it possible to separate the horizon and label it?

Lists of descriptive text segments were identified across the transcripts. All statements that did not meet both of these requirements or statements and were not regarded as relevant to the lived experience were eliminated. Horizons that remained from the elimination process were the invariant constituents of the experience, or themes, that were relevant to the study (Moustakas, 1994).

Step 3: Clustering and Thematizing

Clustering and thematizing the invariant constituents consisted of analyzing the responses to the interview questions. The invariant constituents of the experience were grouped into similar themes, which developed from an examination of the horizons. This cross-case analysis allowed for further reduction and elimination of codes, as well as for themes to emerge. These became the core themes of the experience.

Step 4: Validation

During the validation process, the final identification of the invariant constituents and themes emerged. Interview transcripts were screened for invariant constituents and corresponding themes to identify discrepancies and inconsistencies. Any horizons or themes that varied from the participant's description of the experience were deleted. No discrepancies were present.

Step 5: Textural Description

Individual textural descriptions for each research participant's lived experience were constructed. The individual textural description, defined in Chapter 3 of this research study, allowed for a description of "what" happened in the experience and includes verbatim examples from interview transcriptions. I eliminated overlapping, recurring, and ambiguous expressions during the phenomenological reduction process for steps one through five (Moustakas, 1994).

Step 6: Structural Description

The individual structural description for each research participant's lived experience was reviewed based on the individual textural description along with the imaginative variation process. Structural descriptions may also include verbatim examples from the transcript of the interview at the discretion of the researcher (Moustakas, 1994).

Step 7: Textural-Structural Description

The textural-structural description relied on both textural and structural descriptions to construct an individual description of the meanings and essences of the participants' experience. The 7-step analysis process of the modified van Kaam method was used each time to analyze responses from all 16 participants.

Key terms that resulted from the interviews were used to obtain emerging themes and related the themes to the lived experiences of the participants. The categories were from themes relating to the research questions as well as from components of the conceptual framework applicable to after-hours availability. For instance, when participants mentioned *chose to work, relied on a smartphone or cell phone, or always had access to my devices*, the code *connected 24/7* was generated. The resulting themes suggested promptness, connectivity, blurred work and nonwork domains, positive or negative psychological implications, or other relevant data that contributed to the research questions. Six themes emerged through the findings of the participant's lived experiences through their connectedness affordances to work-related electronic communications and constant availability and the affect of after-hours availability on work-life balance. The emergent themes were (a) technology: mobilize or immobilize; (b) safeguarding personal time; (c) work-life fusion; (d) managing expectations; (e) work engagement; and (f) psychological outcomes.

The completion of the sequenced 7-step modified van Kaam process culminated the data analysis with a composite description. I used the themes to determine the meaning of professional workers lived experiences that involved the key findings and recommendations for the study. A composite description was assembled as the representation of the synthesized shared meanings and essences of the experiences for the group of participants, as a whole. The composite description generated of the 16 professional workers shared experiences was that technology had enabled professional workers to work remotely which provided them flexibility.

Epoché or Bracketing

This research was a transcendental phenomenological study that focused on the lived experiences of professional workers. The phenomenological analysis started with epoché or bracketing. Epoché is the process of setting aside any predispositions and prejudgments towards the phenomenon of constant pressure to monitor and immediately respond to electronic communications during nonwork hours and after-hours availability for work-related purposes. As a working professional with a similar background and experience as the participants and as an informed researcher, I was cognizant of the possibility of any personal biases during the interview process. To avoid any prejudgments, I reflectively meditated, let thoughts enter my mind freely, and cleared my mind to engage in bracketing. I disregarded all preconceptions, beliefs, and refrained from any prior knowledge and judgment of the phenomenon. By clearing my thoughts through this phenomenological process, I was able to recollect my own personal and professional experiences throughout my years of service as a soldier and as a federal government professional worker. Through this bracketing process, I recalled various times that I had responded to work-related electronic messages after-hours and how those actions may have affected my work-life balance strategies. I stay focused on the experiences of the participants (O’Halloran et al., 2016).

Data Analysis Software and Coding

The intent of the data analysis was to review the responses from the interviews to elicit professional workers' perspectives on after-hours work-related information and communication technology use and associated outcomes from their lived experience. As a supplement to the manual modified van Kaam method, NVivo 12 Plus (NVivo) qualitative data analysis software was used to assist with data analytics that aided in discovering patterns and themes in the experiences of professional workers and coded data accordingly. NVivo facilitated importing participants transcribed Word documents into the data analysis software that was immediately followed by the execution of the sorting process. Uploading data into NVivo helped to ensure structure, order, and classification of themes. I extracted and condensed the interview data to identify themes. The extracted data were suitable to help determine if the same or similar emergent themes and patterns were relevant to each participant, as identified during the manual process. Themes were used to develop nodes, word frequency query, and cluster code similarity.

NVivo was used on limited bases as a respository to manage and store data from interviews. NVivo could be used to remove redundant units of data collection, that would further reduce data into patterns, categories, and themes. NVivo qualitative data analysis software was appropriate for identifying and examining trends, combining analysis, coding unstructured data, and generating word frequency and phrases to develop categories and themes. Figure 6 is an image of a word cloud of the most frequently used words generated from participant interviews with the aid of NVivo.

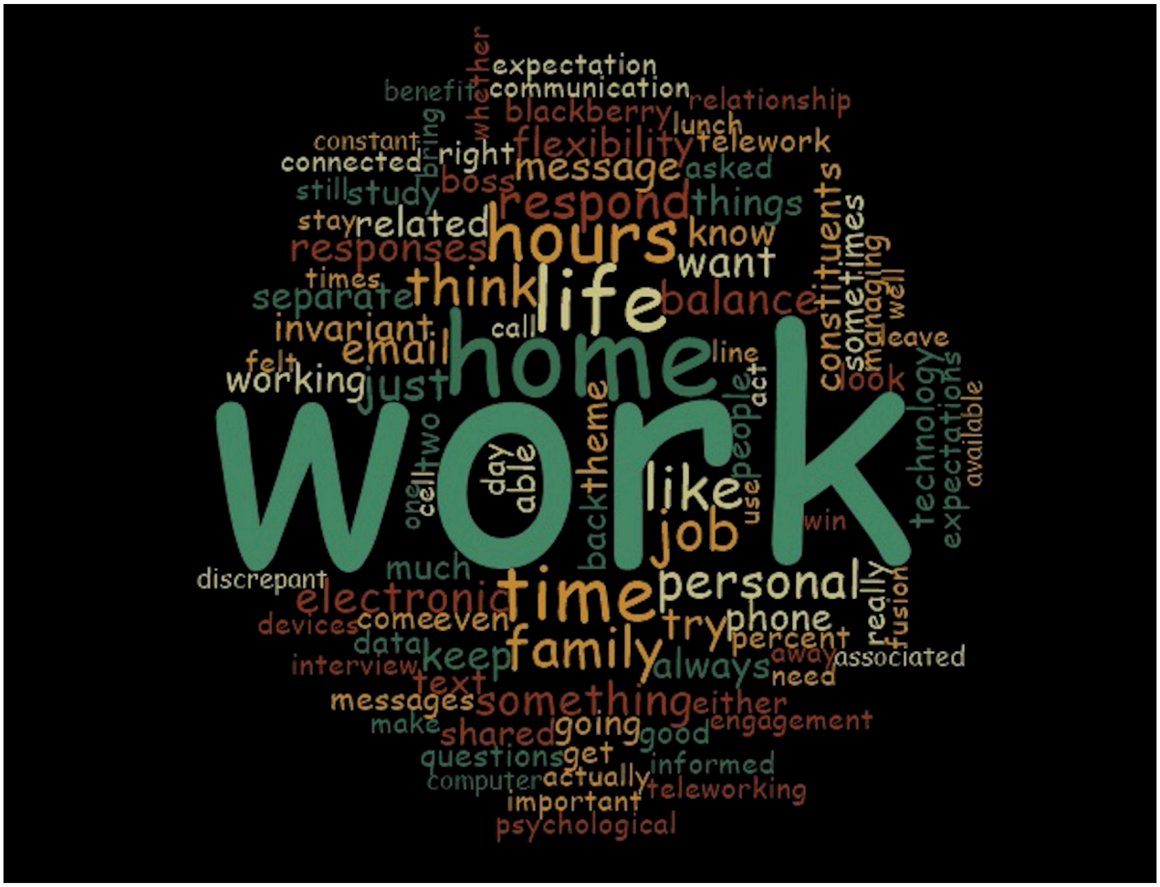


Figure 6. Word cloud of participants’ frequently used words.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Data triangulation was used to validate the trustworthiness of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study and to help strengthen the credibility of the study. I used a data triangulation approach to explore the research questions. I employed multiple data strategy points to help inform a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon. The data sources I used were a pilot study, in-depth semistructured interviews, field notes with researcher’s reflexivity, and a literature map.

The pilot study served as a secondary data source. Pilot study participants' feedback and comments denoted that the interview protocol aligned with the research questions and the nature of the study. The richness and depth of the semistructured interviews from 16 participants of diverse backgrounds served as the primary source of data. The participants were of varying educational levels and served in a range of government positions that provided a basis for their perspectives and experiences. Responses from the participants produced six emergent themes that were sorted into similar categories. Also, to ensure credibility, I determined data saturation point when the results became repetitive, duplicative, and no further codes emerged.

A literature map of the alignment of themes to the conceptual framework, which I present in Table 2 of Chapter 5, is an overview of the frameworks and theories that support the study's findings. Another secondary data source was field journal notes with accompanying researcher's reflexivity. I kept a journal of how my technology-related work-life balance experiences could have influenced the results of the participants' data. Researcher reflexivity is a self-awareness process I used to express the trustworthiness of the findings of the research (Houghton et al., 2013). For data triangulation, I provided rich, detailed descriptions of the results collected from audio recordings and provided meaningful, interpreted findings. Audio recordings were cross-referenced with my field notes to ensure I was not subjecting and bias into the findings. No changes were made between the procedural descriptions for credibility in Chapter 3 and credibility for the results.

Transferability

This research study contains rich, thick descriptions that readers may find compatible with their own life experiences. Participants of this study whose organizations have the same civilian personnel hierarchical structure as this study may be interested in receiving the results of this research. To generate supplementary detailed descriptions, I followed guidelines from Miles et al. (2014). All professional working grade levels were represented across the three groups of which 31% of the participants were intermediate-to-upper-level employees. The participants in this study represented civil engineering, cyber security, human resources, financial management, compliance inspector, program analyst, project management, and federal acquisition professions. These professional workers demonstrated mastery of the technical and operational aspects of their respective fields of work by attaining professional certifications with credentials such as Project Management Professional, Professional in Human Resources, Federal Acquisition Certification, and Certified Information Systems Security Professional. Results of this research study may be transferred to other organizations that include professional workers with contexts similar to the federal government organizations. Even though this study included detailed information, rich, thick descriptions of the participants, participants' responses to questions, places researched, and the discovery of anecdotal evidence to ensure that the study met the requirements of transferability, transferability may not be possible (Cope, 2014). No changes were made to the procedural descriptions in Chapter 3 that directly influenced the transferability of this study.

Dependability

I achieved dependability by triangulating data sources ensured with an audit trail. During the course of the research process, I kept detailed records of pilot study, all the interviews conducted, data alignment to themes and conceptual framework in a literature map, field notes, and recorded my experience of the research process during the interviews. To monitor the changes in the framework of the study, I posted in the journal to serve as a process of generating a systematic examination of the data collected. Along with using field notes, I conducted member checks to also ensure data dependability. No changes were made to the procedural descriptions in Chapter 3 that directly influenced the dependability of this study.

Confirmability

Confirmability is imperative to qualitative research to form trust between readers and the researcher because it illustrates that the sources of data came from perspectives other than the imagination of the researcher (Houghton et al., 2013). To ensure confirmability for this study, my personal biases were disregarded by bracketing to ensure the correctness or genuine reflections of the participants’ perspectives. Leading questions based on my past experiences and familiarity were eliminated during the pilot study examination of the interview process. The reflective journal that I kept about my experiences also helped minimize any biases during this research study. An analysis and comparison of information from multiple data sources and different employees provided an in-depth understanding to ensure triangulation and conformability of the study results.

No changes were made to the procedural descriptions in Chapter 3 that directly influenced the confirmability of this study.

Field Notes and Accompanying Researcher's Reflexivity

During the semistructured interviews, I was able to take notes without distracting the participants. The flow of the interviews adopted a conversational style. I wrote down bulleted notes, sometimes on my iPad and other times on a stenography pad, while trying to maintain focus on careful listening and maintaining rapport with the participant. I had an interview protocol that I used to guide the conversations. The interview protocol was a living document and helped keep me focused. I used the interview protocol to prompt and probe participants and revised those cues as needed, per interview. Soon after the second interview, I reordered two questions to allow a more natural progression of the conversation. I conducted a pilot study and reviewed the sequencing of the questions; the awkward pauses in the flow were not detected. I successively continued to ask open-ended questions prompting participants to explore and address different facets of their experiences in more detail to facilitate a richer, fuller account of their experiences. Participants proceeded and enriched the responses with their personal stories. An exploration of the data collected for this study yielded rich, thick descriptions. Data collection continued until data saturation had been achieved as evidenced that no new information was generated. As I continued with the interviews, I improved how I asked questions without losing the original intent of the question.

The transcription service noted that some of the narrative statements were inaudible. Repeating a sequence of reflecting on the interview session, screening the handwritten notes taken during the interview, and simultaneously listening and replaying the audio recording, assisted in filling in missing data to the transcribed narratives that were not clearly audible on the audio recordings. My analysis of the transcriptions focused on gaining a deeper understanding of the participants by using Moustakas's (1994) hand-coded or manual modified van Kaam method. Use of the manual method gave me an opportunity to become more familiar with the participants' stories as they related to the research questions.

To ensure I accurately captured notes during interview sessions, my planned method was to document four main areas, to achieve consistency with all participants. I attempted to accurately document dates and times of the interviews, along with the participants' environment, and the social dynamics. I digitally recorded all of the interviews except one. I conducted the interviews by telephone and was not able to visually access the participants' natural environment (Miles et al., 2014). In some instances, I was able to detect if a participant was in a setting that was interrupted with family matters, pet distractions, and cell phone interruptions with text messages. Some participants were eager to participate, but not as eager to accept the behavior associated with their use of electronics. For instance, a few participants paused or hesitated, almost in embarrassment and apologetic when responding to being continually connected to their mobile work devices after-hours. Handwritten notes were value-added and were used to authenticate the transcribed data from the original audio recordings for each recorded interview.

A reflexive journal was maintained and included any preconceptions, influences, or reactions I may have had. I continually recorded a variety of reflective information about conversations during interviews and about myself and the phenomenological method. The reflexive journal provided information about the methodological process-related choices and the reasons for making certain decisions. As a novice phenomenological researcher, it was of concern and was important to me that I prepare myself for success to address the research questions. I familiarized myself through journal articles and books with interviewing techniques and skills for a phenomenological researcher. It had become apparent after I completed data collection that I was hesitant to begin data analysis. This emotion was related to my limited understanding of the execution of the phenomenological process. My apprehension over the process had, up to that point, prevented me from making any substantive progress with my data analysis. As I continued to immerse myself in the literature and learn more about the phenomenological process, I attained an acceptable level of comfort with the process and with my overall level of proficiency to accomplish the mission. On some other occasions during the data analysis process, I reached a point of frustration that later subsided as my understanding increased. Although going through that period was aggravating in terms of my output, I was not discouraged. I was determined to use that time as an opportunity to sharpen my data analytic skills. It was thought-provoking for me to reflect on this phase of preparation. Documenting these reflections provided assurance in having an extensive application to all four areas of trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Study Results

The research problem was specified in the research questions. The research questions addressed the way in which after-hours availability affected work-life balance of professional workers who were likely to check and quickly answer work-related communications. Interview responses were condensed and paraphrased to assist with the thematic analysis process (Braun & Clarke, 2016). Relevant responses to the interview questions were reduced to 18 invariant constituents categorized into six themes. The formulation of themes based on the invariant constituents was illustrated in Figure 7. In Table 2, the themes were categorized in relationship to the research questions. The findings of the study were associated with the two research questions that were based on the relationships of participants' responses to the interview questions. The sections that follow were the core themes that represented portrayals of the participants' experiences followed by verbatim excerpts of the participant's lived experiences.

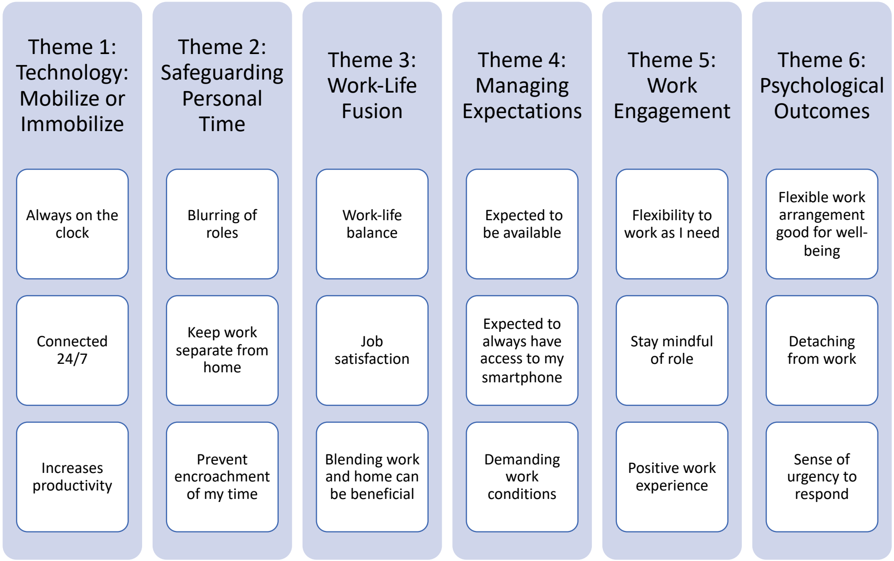
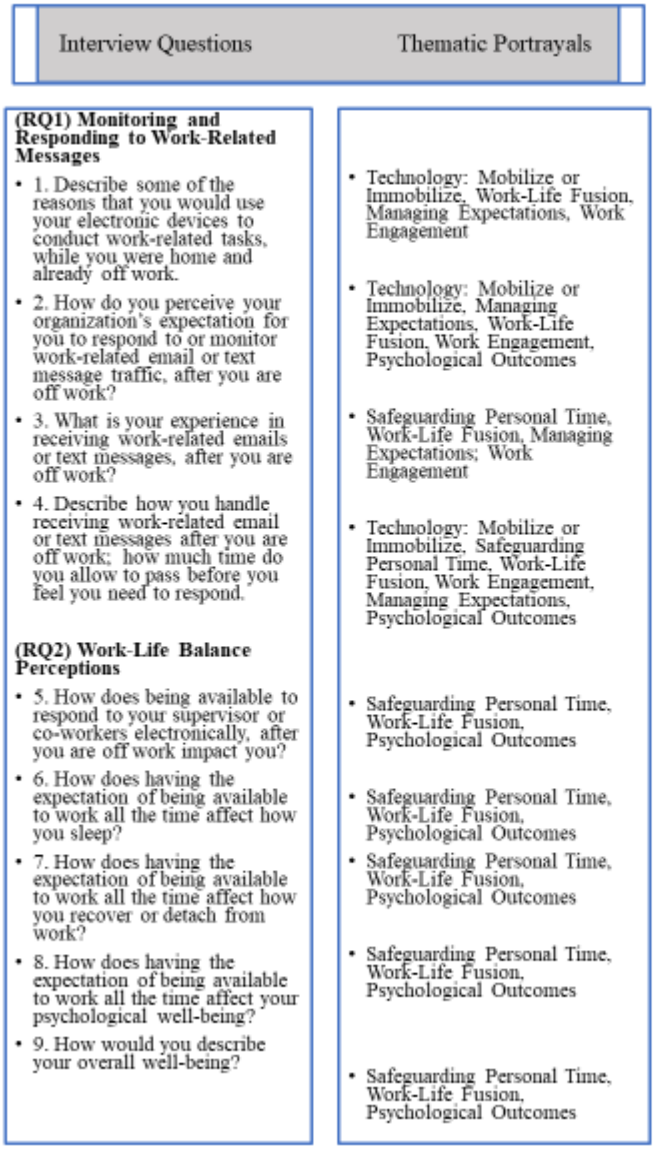

Theme 1: Technology: Mobilize or Immobilize
Always on the clock
Connected 24/7
Increases productivity
Theme 2: Safeguarding Personal Time
Blurring of roles
Keep work separate from home
Prevent encroachment of my time
Theme 3: Work-Life Fusion
Work-life balance
Job satisfaction
Blending work and home can be beneficial
Theme 4: Managing Expectations
Expected to be available
Expected to always have access to my smartphone
Demanding work conditions
Theme 5: Work Engagement
Flexibility to work as I need
Stay mindful of role
Positive work experience
Theme 6: Psychological Outcomes
Flexible work arrangement good for well-being
Detaching from work
Sense of urgency to respond

Figure 7. Formulation of themes based on invariant constituents.



Interview Questions	Thematic Portrayals
(RQ1) Monitoring and Responding to Work-Related Messages	
1. Describe some of the reasons that you would use your electronic devices to conduct work-related tasks, while you were home and already off work.	Technology: Mobilize or Immobilize, Work-Life Fusion, Managing Expectations, Work Engagement
2. How do you perceive your organization's expectation for you to respond to or monitor work-related email or text message traffic, after you are off work?	Technology: Mobilize or Immobilize, Managing Expectations, Work-Life Fusion, Work Engagement, Psychological Outcomes
3. What is your experience in receiving work-related emails or text messages, after you are off work?	Safeguarding Personal Time, Work-Life Fusion, Managing Expectations; Work Engagement
4. Describe how you handle receiving work-related email or text messages after you are off work; how much time do you allow to pass before you feel you need to respond.	Technology: Mobilize or Immobilize, Safeguarding Personal Time, Work-Life Fusion, Work Engagement, Managing Expectations, Psychological Outcomes
(RQ2) Work-Life Balance Perceptions	
5. How does being available to respond to your supervisor or co-workers electronically, after you are off work impact you?	Safeguarding Personal Time, Work-Life Fusion, Psychological Outcomes
6. How does having the expectation of being available to work all the time affect how you sleep?	Safeguarding Personal Time, Work-Life Fusion, Psychological Outcomes
7. How does having the expectation of being available to work all the time affect how you recover or detach from work?	Safeguarding Personal Time, Work-Life Fusion, Psychological Outcomes
8. How does having the expectation of being available to work all the time affect your psychological well-being?	Safeguarding Personal Time, Work-Life Fusion, Psychological Outcomes
9. How would you describe your overall well-being?	Safeguarding Personal Time, Work-Life Fusion, Psychological Outcomes

Figure 8. Thematic portrayals to interview questions.

Theme 1: Technology: Mobilize or Immobilize

The theme technology: mobilize or immobilize was informed by eight invariant constituents: electronic devices simultaneously enhance and restrict my flexibility; I am usually always connected; connected 24/7 with some form of electronic device; as a professional, I rely on mobile technology; technology has pros and cons; use work computer at home because it is convenient; job interruptions at home; and I bring the stress on myself by self-inflicting connectivity. Of the sampled population, 100% of them conveyed that one of the reasons they would use their electronic devices to conduct work-related tasks, while they were home and already off work would be because they chose to work after-hours. All of the participants expressed that electronic technological devices either provided an element of mobility or immobility causing a feeling of always being connected to work in some manner. According to a professional worker who discussed how he underestimated the extent of the escalation of connectivity and work commitment; the participant made a distinction between managing e-mail and scholarly work by saying, “e-mail was not real work” (MSP5). The following data samples provide support to the questions regarding technology: mobilize or immobilize.

- Oh my goodness, I don’t think I am working too much. Absolutely not. Outside of the regular 8-hour day, sometimes it’s two or three days a week, so six, seven hours. I don’t mind. I don’t know why, I just like doing that stuff. It doesn’t cause stress or strain. For me, it’s just a lot of, I hate to say it, a lot of fun. (MSP5)

- As soon as I notice I have a message, I respond immediately. My work phone is plugged in and on, ready to go. It’s always on. I actually have it plugged in so it can charge, keep it charging, but I check it routinely. I’m always checking it just to make sure that an e-mail is not coming in that I’m not aware of. When my son was little he would say, mom your Blackberry’s calling you. (MSP6)
- A lot of times after hours, because of the nature of being a virtual employee, people work beyond their normal hours. If I hear a pinging sound because I have an e-mail, I tend to answer it. Or at least, look at it, just so I’m informed of whether or not it is information being put out. (MSP11)
- If I think it’s something important that needs to be addressed the next day and someone needs to act on it or I need to act on it …, if it’s anything that my bosses and I see, I will act on it immediately, even though I know you don’t expect me to do it after work. I do it anyway just because that’s the way I think. (MSP12)
- I must admit, in the beginning, I thought I would only be tormented with a cell phone provided by my job. But, it relieves me; it eases my life sometimes. I know that means more working hours and that I am simply increasing my workload. (MSP16)

Theme 2: Safeguarding Personal Time

The theme safeguarding personal time was determined from four main invariant constituents: the blurring of roles; lines of separation; keeping work separate during personal time; and encroachment of my time and space. Ninety-three percent of the participants acknowledged that they had a clear awareness that the increased technology use meant an encroachment on their leisure time that would be enhanced by work communication during their personal times. Forty-four percent of the participants expressed that it was impossible to separate work matters from personal matters with the daily blurring of work-to-home and home-to-work. The following data samples provide support to the questions regarding safeguarding personal time.

- When I'm at home, my focus is not on work. It's on the environment I'm around: friends, family, things of that nature. So, I guess that kind of sums up to me where there's a definite separation between work and my personal life, and what I try to do is try and minimize how much of a blend from, either way, work into one or the other. (MSP1)
- I don't want to become one of those people. I look at my brother sometimes he leaves work and then comes home and start back working at home. For me, I think I have a pretty good balance; for the most part because I try to keep things separate. I'll work at work and do home at home. (MSP2)
- When I'm at home, and I'm doing things with my family, I don't want to bring the job in to interfere with those events and activities that I do with my family. Then visa-versa, I don't want to really bring family type distractions into my job. I want to do my job, and I want to do a good job at it. I want to be efficiently effective on the job, so I can be efficiently effective when I'm not there doing other things with my family. (MSP5)

- Actually, when my organization was making the suggestion, “We’re going to give you a Blackberry,” I’m going ...Okay, what’s the purpose of that? At least since that has happened, there’s not an expectation for me to work in a non-paid status. I do not turn it on. Even when I telework, I shut down. When it’s off, it’s off, drama-free! (MSP7)
- I brought this laptop home every day this week, and well for the last week and a half, and I’ve only opened it once. Because I have kept it separate so much that it’s hard for me to do “work-work” at home. (MSP9)
- I think it’s important to try to keep work at work best you can. Do as much as you can. And when you come home, you have that peace of mind knowing that I got my work piece covered and I can come home in peace and do my family life. So I think to have those two distinctions are very important. (MSP15)

Theme 3: Work-Life Fusion

A common theme among all of the participants was work-life fusion. Work-life fusion was formulated from the invariant constituents: work-life balance; balancing act; blending work and home can be beneficial; job satisfaction; work-life integration, and managing work and nonwork demands at home. Job satisfaction was cited as the single most important element for work-life balance. The participants were asked how they define work-life balance. The consensus among them was that they draw boundaries in their home-life. Several participants discussed that they want to keep their work-life separate from their home-life, but their actions were blended and in contrast to what they shared in telling their stories. The following data samples provide support to the questions regarding work-life fusion.

- I have been bringing my laptop home for the last couple of weeks to work on something at home that I didn’t really have time to do at work. Not really a requirement, but something I want to get done, but hard to find time at work. (MSP2)
- Well, I have a government Blackberry, the phones that they give to us. And I normally use the Blackberry for e-mail, just in case something hot is in there, so I address it before getting to the office. That’s why they issue us the phone (MSP6)
- I think that work-life balance is a formula that allows you to both be competitive and successful at work but also to take care of your personal needs and aspirations. (MSP8)
- I thought to myself, let me not set a precedence for this, because if I’m willing to see what this message is about today, then is that going to be their expectation, and I’m not starting that. (MSP10)
- I actually like the opportunity to be able to do things at home, even when I’m off work. It helps me keep up or catch up. Don’t be behind on things and keeps me ahead, but I don’t expect the people who work for me to work after they are off work. (MSP12)
- I try to keep work at work and when I come home to be family-oriented as much as I can. But then again, I am accessible because I make sure the

> employees understand if you need me, call me. But I do distinguish between I'm off work, I'm with my family, I'm doing my family time. And I try to keep the two distinct and separate. I try not to come home and bring work, which interferes with my personal and my family life. So, it is a line if you will, but it's not a hard line. It's a dotted line. (MSP15)

Theme 4: Managing Expectations

The theme managing expectations is a composite of five main invariant constituents: I do not broadcast it; I am always available on my smartphone; I have not been told, yet I am expected to be available; feels like I am always on-call; I am expected to always have access to my smartphone, and demanding work conditions causes me to stay on alert and respond after-hours. Managing expectations was informed by the participants' responses to Interview Question 2. When the participants were asked how soon they felt the need to respond to work-related messages that were received after working hours, 93% of the participants cited the desire to review the messages almost upon its arrival. The other 7% of the participants intentionally placed their work phone in an area away from where they would notice it. Thirty-seven percent of the participants felt it was not that their boss failed to consider that it was after-hours. The participants explained that their boss would not have contacted them unless the information was needed. The following data samples provide support to the questions regarding managing expectations.

- Well, what I did was I looked at the phone for a few minutes, and it was like how do you start texting something, you are like [oh gosh] …, so I erased it and started typing something else. Then I said, you know, no, that is not going to be right either. (MSP2)

- Management does not expect me to respond, at least they have not, you know, they haven't presented it that way. I guess it depends on what it is. But sometimes, I will say, I feel a little self-induced pressure to respond. (MSP3)
- So now they got my cell phone number. I'm not an on-call person. I got a text from a co-worker, about a month ago, "Hey, the boss was in the office today and said the system was down." And it's a Saturday and I'm looking at the text message like, so what. You call me on a Saturday, not really sure what you're trying to say here (MSP9)
- So my first process is to see where the e-mail originated from. My second process is determine the priority for it. Then I'll either respond or I'll either let it wait. (MSP11)
- Because this job is very demanding, I think when I was assigned, there was an agreement to work after-hours. We're not keeping tabs of time and stuff like that, which is a good thing. Some days are longer than others. There's an honor system associated with it meaning that you will do your forty hours and you should know what that looks like. (MSP14)
- They make it known that they want you to reply as soon as possible. They sometimes send e-mail or text messages after-hours, saying, thank you in advance, I appreciate your help. My supervisor said, I was going to send this tomorrow, but I am glad you saw my message. (MSP16)

Theme 5: Work Engagement

In the literature, work engagement is generally associated with positive work-related outcomes (Derks et al., 2015). The participant's data revealed responses that indicated a positive work-to-home and home-to-work relationship. The theme work engagement was informed by the invariant constituents: I have the flexibility to work as I need; I try to stay mindful of what role I am in when working from home; work autonomy; positive work experience; and job satisfaction. Ninety-four percent of the participants had preapproval or received approval, as needed from their employers for flexible work arrangements, such as telework. Sixty-nine percent of the participants had a telework agreement, 25% of the participants performed telework in an ad hoc or situational status, and six percent of the participants worked virtually. Participants in the 94 percentile, stated that having the ability to work from home has helped them establish a better work-life balance by providing them flexibility. Six percent of the participants said they did not favor teleworking. Sixty-nine percent of participants who regularly teleworked shared the sentiment that flexible work arrangements enabled them to work from home and still be able to be productive in their work roles. The following data samples provide support to the questions regarding work engagement.

- Yeah, being able to telework increases my flexibility to achieve a good work-life balance. In this instance, I don't have to worry about taking a leave to take care of my father, even though I'm just going to be here at the house; I can still work. The job gets to benefit because I'm able to continue executing work in a timely manner. It's a win-win. (MSP3)

- There is a benefit of flexibility for people that respond to or monitor the after-hours e-mails and text message; it’s a win-win for the individual and for the organization. (MSP4)
- I took a work project home and worked on it after-hours. I did and always have, but I was doing it so that when other staff was leaving early, I could leave too. (MSP9)
- It was 7:00 pm Friday, I received a report from a co-worker requesting a peer-review. I said okay, will do. Actually, I sent my report back to him, “Hey, when you get a chance look at this. There was no sense of urgency; he’s like another set of eyes. I have had no obligation to get on it right then and there. I feel a sense of professionalism to send him something back when I look at it. But I don’t feel a sense of obligation. (MSP11)

Theme 6: Psychological Outcomes

The theme psychological outcomes was formulated from the invariant constituents: urge to read mail or messages right away; enhanced employee morale; detaching from work; lack of autonomy; fear of missing out; and flexibility is good for morale. Participants were asked: how does having the expectation of being available to work all the time affect your psychological well-being. Sixty-two percent of the participants stated that the effects of electronic communication origins on emotions and work to nonwork conflict depended on features of who the message was from and rapport with the sender. Several of the participants shared that they were more likely to become stressed when the after-hours electronic communication was from an organizational leader with whom they did not have a committed working relationship and when that leader was not respectful of their time. There was an extensive range of responses and emotions. The following data samples provide support to the questions regarding psychological outcomes.

- When I felt like I had to be connected, I felt like my family was sharing time with me and the job, even when I was supposed to be off of work. I was not devoting time to them, even though physically I was fully there and present. Mentally, they were only getting half of the attention because the other half was thinking on work. (MSP1)
- Oh. It's no impact. The impact is controlled by me, whether I choose to answer the e-mail, respond to it, that's all on me if I choose to look at it at all. (MSP4)
- Having access to a work cell phone and laptop is a blessing and a curse when it comes to maintaining balance. There is constant pressure of having electronic devices, there is never an excuse for not receiving something or having knowledge of something. (MSP6)
- When I'm teleworking, I have a lunch period and I try not to schedule anything over lunch. I pause my computer during lunch. I normally go out and get lunch, come back in and then start back up. I think that's necessary because if not you will burn yourself out. If you think because you're at home you can just stay connected for the 8 or 9; I don't think that's healthy. (MSP8)

- What I did mostly for myself was I realized ... I guess I just sat down one day and it was like, okay, you're doing too much. I started putting myself on schedules with stuff. There were some things I wanted to accomplish that I wasn't accomplishing, and time was getting away from me. (MSP9)
- I will truly say that people will push and push and push, but you still have to realize at the end of the day, at the end of the project, if you constantly work like that, with only a few hours of sleep and back into work ... I don't think it makes for a healthy environment. (MSP10)
- He [my boss] called on my personal cell, and he wanted me to look over [some work]. I had my computer only because I had planned to do some work on my downtime. I planned to work on a project on my downtime. That was the only reason why I had it. (MSP11)
- There is a clear benefit to teleworking. When you're teleworking it enables more flexibility because you're right there. Sometimes I'll wind up and stay online a little bit longer, and when I shut down, I'm still off-line before I would normally get home. (MSP13)

Discrepant Case Data

The participants in this study did not decline to respond to any of the questions. The participants offered responses to every interview question asked of them. I performed an exhaustive analysis of the collected data to conclude whether there were any discrepant cases or nonconfirming data. When the coding transcription was completed, the study disclosed no evidence of discrepant cases in the research study data. Collected data were analyzed, which then led to the findings.

Summary

The chapter contained a discussion of the data collection methods and included a detailed analysis of the lived experiences of 16 federal government professional workers. The intent of this chapter was to describe the processes used to answer the research questions, "what are the lived experiences of professional workers with constant pressure to monitor and immediately respond to electronic communications after-hours for work-related purposes and "how does after-hours availability impact work-life balance?" Nine semi-structured interview questions aided in exploring the participants' experiences. The participants' in-depth responses contained their rich experiences.

The data collected from these interviews, as well as the in-depth analysis conducted, generated six themes that were related to the research questions and the conceptual framework of the study. The themes, (a) technology: mobilize or immobilize; (b) safeguarding personal time; (c) work-life fusion; (d) managing expectations; (e) work engagement; and (f) psychological outcomes constituted how employees responded to electronic communications after-hours for work-related purposes and how after-hours availability affected balancing work and nonwork. Participants recognized that the increasing expectations of employers and the availability of smartphones has helped with managing periods of availability. Findings revealed that professional workers interviewed in this study still felt a sense of urgency to respond to work-related e-mails and text messages outside of their regularly scheduled work hours and felt a sense of professional obligation to be available after-hours. Findings indicated how some professional workers believed it was customary to be continually connected after-hours and that there were perceived boundaries between work and nonwork.

Participants were eager to share experiences of their world-view, in relation to their electronic communications behavior. Participants were mindful of the advantages and disadvantages of connective devices, which caused them to be more attentive and aware of their electronic communications behavior. Chapter 5 includes an interpretation of the findings, implications for social change, limitations, recommendations for future research, and conclusions citation.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

According to recent studies (Boswell et al., 2016; Butts et al., 2015), there is a lack of research on a mixed range of working professionals regarding after-hours electronic communications and the balance of work and nonwork. Additional research is needed to close the knowledge gap regarding the advantages and disadvantages of technology-related work-life conflicts on professionals who use information and communication technology devices after-hours for the purpose of work (Mellner, 2016). The current study's purpose was to explore and describe the lived experiences of employees who found themselves working remotely after-hours, undertaking work-related matters in a nonpaid status. A qualitative research method with a transcendental phenomenological design was appropriate to study the phenomenon.

The study consisted of interviews with 16 intermediate- to upper-level professional workers. The findings of the study revealed several themes: (a) technology: mobilize or immobilize, (b) safeguarding personal time, (c) work-life fusion, (d) managing expectations, (e) work engagement, and (f) psychological outcomes. These themes are underlying dynamics of constantly monitoring and immediately responding to work-related electronic communications and how after-hours availability affects the work-life balance experienced by the participants.

Interpretation of Findings

Derks and Bakker (2014) and Kossek (2016) identified that organizations' increased expectations regarding availability during nonwork times suggested employees felt compelled to immediately respond to electronic communications during leisure time.

An exploration of the participants' lived experiences provided an understanding of how professional workers coped and managed expectations regarding after-hours availability. Findings revealed that employees felt a sense of urgency to respond in an immediate way to electronic communications from their employers and to be available during nonwork times.

Results of the current study indicated that some professional workers thought it was normal to be continually connected after-hours and that there were not any boundaries between work and nonwork (see Piszczek et al., 2016). These participants did not see blending work into their nonwork domains as being significant. This finding extends previous theory and research in this area by indicating that work conducted through the use of information and communication technologies outside of normal working hours may contribute to perceptions of work-life imbalance (Boswell et al., 2016).

Participants at times downplayed the significance of work-related activities that were happening outside of official working hours. Participants shared that when they physically left the workplace, they did not leave the responsibility to complete their work. Boswell et al. (2016) reported that ambition and job involvement are of particular importance in explaining electronic communications behavior after-hours where employees identified with an organization's level of expectancy. In Table 2, the conceptual framework is categorized in relation to the themes.

Table 2

Alignment of Themes to Conceptual Framework of the Study

Conceptual Framework Main Concepts	Themes	Alignment with Conceptual Framework
Work-Life Balance Construct (Derks et al., 2014; Kossek et al., 2014). A metaphor for resolving temporal conflict that deals with competing demands on time from different domains of work and life; the quality of work-life and overall sense of well-being.	Work-Life Fusion; Psychological Outcomes; Safeguarding Personal Time	In alignment with Allen et al. (2014), participants identified, with work-life balance in terms of overall satisfaction with the balance between work and nonwork rather than conflict or lack of conflict.
Role Characteristics Boundary and Border Theories (Ashforth et al., 2000; Clark, 2000; Nippert-Eng, 1996). A framework of physical, temporal, and psychological limitations people form and maintain between family and work to manage multiple life roles.	Technology: Mobilize or Immobilize; Safeguarding Personal Time; Work-Life Fusion; Managing Expectations; Work Engagement; Psychological Outcomes	In alignment with boundary and border theories, there was minimal demarcation between segmented and integrated temporal boundaries for the study participants, especially for those who elected to integrate mobile devices.
Flexible Work Arrangements (Higgins et al., 2014). Work that is unlike the usual eight hours, 5 days a week schedule in an office and includes a compressed work week, part-time work, and telework.	Work Engagement; Psychological Outcomes	Findings revealed that teleworking could be a win-win solution that allows employees the autonomy to continue to be productive.
Information and Communication Technology Constructs (Fenner & Renn, 2010). Coined technology-assisted supplemental work to describe people who performed work-related tasks at home after regular working hours with the use of information and communication technology.	Technology: Mobilize or Immobilize; Work-Life Fusion; Psychological Outcomes	Participants views align with Mazmanian et al. (2013) who indicated the use of information and communication technology is supposed to offer employees greater flexibility and control over work, instead of creating work-life imbalances and unproductive employees.

Comparison of Findings to Conceptual Framework and Theories

An integration of four associated frameworks and theories shaped the organization of the literature for the conceptual framework. In the conceptual framework, the following were the main concepts that were explored as part of my argumentation: work-life balance construct (Derks et al., 2014; Kossek et al., 2014), role characteristics (Ashforth et al., 2000; Clark, 2000; Katz & Kahn, 1978; Nippert-Eng, 1996), flexible work arrangements (Higgins et al., 2014), and information and communication technology constructs (Fenner & Renn, 2010). Derks et al. (2015) suggested that work supported by information and communication technology demanded connectivity, immediacy, and blurred lines of demarcation between work and nonwork roles. Several professional workers in this study expressed that they wanted to keep their work life separate from their home life. However, the professional workers' actions were in contrast of what they expressed. The sections that follow are the four components of the conceptual framework.

Work-life balance construct. Findings of this study aligned with the study of Derks et al. (2014) who suggested that work-life balance is the degree to which individuals cope with opposing demands on their time from the different domains of work and nonwork. According to Larsen and Bong (2016), several common misconceptions of work-life balance exist. Participants in the current study employed a variation of strategies to realize work-life balance. Participants expressed that they attempted to make personal time a priority and placed high emphasis on keeping family life separate from work at designated times. In alignment with Allen et al. (2014), participants also identified with work-life balance in terms of overall satisfaction with the balance between work and nonwork rather than conflict or lack of conflict. Some participants felt that there were different ideas of fulfillment in achieving work-life balance, such as an overall representation of how an individual handles the interaction of multiple roles. For example, a participant identified with work-life balance as blending work and home life to achieve balance.

Role characteristics. The premise of boundary and border theories suggests that using information and communication technologies in the home to perform work-related tasks may contribute to work-to-family, work--nonwork conflict (Ashforth et al., 2000). In spillover theory (Berkowsky, 2013; Pleck et al., 1980), emotions and behaviors in one area of life carry over to another role. In alignment with spillover theory, there was slight separation between segmented and integrated temporal boundaries for the current study participants, especially for those who elected to integrate mobile devices (e.g. same cell phone or laptop for personal and work). Some of the participants who were virtual workers explained that they separated their technology, while other participants combined cell phones and laptops for both personal activities and work. Haeger and Lingman (2014) noted that information and communication technologies sustained role integration between work and nonwork domains and facilitated employees' ability to perform work away from the office at any time, which was confirmed in the current study. In this study, participants who regularly crossed boundaries remaining connected to work through smartphones, laptops, and tablets. Being continually connected allowed work-related issues to spill over to their nonwork domain and disrupted the recovery process, which aligned with Katz and Kahn's theory.

Flexible work arrangements. Galinsky et al. (2013) and Vesala and Tuomivaara (2015) disagreed regarding the impact of teleworking on employee well-being. Vesala and Tuomivaara found that teleworking was positively affecting employees' well-being. This study's findings revealed that teleworking could be a win-win solution that allows employees the autonomy to be productive while meeting their other life needs. Participants also reported that telework provided them flexibility and allowed them to develop effective work-life balancing strategies. In contrast, Galinsky et al. argued against the premise of work-life balance programs and resisted implementing telework. My findings revealed that 100% of the participants reported that they viewed flexible work programs such as telework as an indicator of an organization's willingness to improve work-life balance. Six percent of the participants said they only teleworked under administrative conditions because they preferred the traditional office environment although they liked the telework concept for their staff employees.

Information and communication technology constructs. Kossek (2016) reported that occasionally conflicting work and nonwork responsibilities for managerial purposes and work structures had a broad range of psychological implications. Participants in the current study expressed that they try to remain mindful of their role when they are in a nonwork domain and that they assess whether the communication needs an immediate response. Mazmanian et al. (2013) reported that work intrusion into off-work times was not necessarily detrimental. Although not detrimental, work intrusion could lead to a feeling that work never ends. Mazmanian et al. revealed that participants felt a sense of obligation to immediately check and respond to work-related electronic communications received during nonwork times. According to Mazmanian et al., participants diminished their autonomy and endorsed a norm of being available at all times.

Findings in the current study that addressed immediately responding to messages and the perception of work-related demands correlated to constructs of Brod's (1984) technostress and Barber and Santuzzi's (2015) workplace telepressure. The premise of the constructs is a manifestation of a strong compulsion to engage technology regularly, where individuals view work-related communications as soon as they arrive (Barber & Santuzzi, 2015; Brod, 1984). A participant admitted "as soon as I notice I have a message, I respond immediately." Participants views aligned with Mazmanian et al. (2013) who found that the use of information and communication technology is supposed to offer employees greater flexibility and control over work, instead of creating work-life imbalance and unproductive employees.

Limitations of the Study

There were several limitations in this study. The first limitation was the scope, which was limited to a small number of intermediate- to upper-level federal employees near Washington, DC. The small sample size and specific geographic location limited the findings (Miles et al., 2014), which may not be transferable to all federal government workers.

The second limitation in this study was researcher bias. Researcher bias is a common limitation in phenomenological research (O'Halloran et al., 2016). I followed the bracketing process (see Moustakas, 1994) and did not impose my assumptions or biases into the data collection or data analysis process. Nonetheless, given that I selected the participants for the pilot study using purposive sampling (Adler & Clark, 2014), the possibility of unintended partiality toward the participants in the selection process may have existed.

The third limitation of this study was the transcendental phenomenological method. The transcendental phenomenological method does not support an explanation in which causality can be asserted. The transcendental phenomenological method enabled me to describe the participants' experiences as professional workers with constant pressure to monitor and immediately respond to electronic communications beyond the normal work day. Despite this limitation, the use of triangulation may have enabled the results to be an accurate representation of electronic communications behavior of the professional workers interviewed.

Recommendations

Future research on this topic could take many paths. What could be of value would be to return to the Washington, DC area to conduct a quantitative study within the next 5 years with a broader scope of federal government professional workers. With the rapid advances in connective technology devices, researchers could examine the ways in which the stress and strain of being available at all times influences well-being (Boswell et al., 2016). As Xie et al. (2018) recommended, future studies should focus on organizational practices regarding employees' personal life and professional life to better understand the blurring lines between work and nonwork domains, and whether organizations feel less pressure to conform to changing societal norms. I would like to know the causes and effects of not disengaging from information and communication technological devices for work-related purposes after normal working hours. One of the inclusion criteria for participation in the current study was that the participant must be at least 18 years of age. There were no participants under the age of 46. A future study could include younger participants to gain perspectives from that population. Another option would be to undertake the same stud y in private sector corporations to compare findings.

In this study, nine semistructured interview questions, relative to the research questions, were designed to gain an understanding into how professional workers experienced responding to electronic communications after-hours for work-related purposes. This study addressed how after-hours availability affected balancing work and nonwork. For further exploration, future studies could focus on whether smartphones are facilitators into contributing to work engagement, as recommended by Derks and Bakker (2014).

Findings of this study were congruent with the literature regarding work-related information and communication technology use outside of normal working hours and perceptions of work-life imbalance (see Boswell et al., 2016). Findings revealed that some professional workers did not consider being constantly connected to work as a conflict between work and nonwork domains and did not consider integrating the two roles as blurring the boundary lines (Piszczek et al., 2016). As Mellner (2016) recommended, the need for further research on conducting more qualitative studies to understand whether non-boundary work actually involved working anytime and anywhere should be conducted. The relationships between new technology-enabled working methods and the implications for employees' ability to attain psychological detachment and subsequent sleep, recovery, and well-being would be the aim of Mellner's study. Additional findings on electronic communications behavior phenomenon may help support design initiatives for organizational change programs for leaders at all levels, in multiple disciplines and practices to include the management, leadership and organizational change professions.

As a professional worker of the federal government employed near Washington, DC for more than 15 years, there were strengths and limitations for me as a researcher. Participants' cooperation and trustworthiness in the study supported the decision to conduct this study in my region. Participants' were genuinely interested in the study's topic and showed an eagerness to willingly participate and share their stories of the phenomenon. This study did not provide participants any options to support data collection efforts. Interviews were conducted telephonically as the most efficient option due to the geographically dispersed regions in the Washington, DC area. I recommend that participants have a range of options to support data collection by taking advantage of electronic media platforms. A multi-source strategy (Subbaraman et al., 2015) using social media (Topolovec-Vranic & Natarajan, 2016) may be a more inclusive option for participants.

My study was limited in that it only took into consideration the conceptual framework through the lens of boundary and border theories. I recommend further studies include a theoretical framework or change the conceptual framework that the study was based upon to increase awareness in different areas. An observation was made after reviewing the results from the current study. The choice of a theoretical framework such as social learning theory may have provided more understanding as to why the phenomena of responding to and the perception of work-related demands of electronic communications after-hours had been positive for some participants and not for others. According Bandura (1977), social learning theory makes the assumption that people learn behavior within a social context through observation of other relevant people and imitating them.

As noted in the literature, Wright et al. (2014) recommended that future researchers consider exploring variances in perceptions of work-life conflict, such as intrusions based on the types of communication devices used by workers. An example provided that mobile smartphones allow workers to be reached anywhere, although employees characteristically do not carry around laptop computers (Mazmanian et al., 2013). Wright et al. added that it would also be of interest to explore the extent to which varied communication devices contribute to work-life conflict in future studies.

Implications

Positive Social Change

Findings from this study may improve knowledge in the management discipline in such a manner that generates positive social change by providing a basis of understanding of the positive and negative effects of work-related electronic communications behavior outside of normal working hours that fosters continuous change to aid employers. Successful management initiatives may result from the stories developed by participants from this transcendental phenomenological study to help employers and others understand the participants' experiences. Ramarajan and Reid (2013) claimed that the perceptions and beliefs of people are powerful in how they tell their story. The implication for positive social change may lie in the potential to shape effective organizational change programs for technology-related work-life imbalances (Mellner, 2016).

Future research may also be conducted to explore how societal and organizational norms will continue to shape organizational practices around employee's personal-life and professional-life by continuing to blur the lines between work and nonwork boundary domains, if organizations feel less pressure to conform to changing norms (Xie et al., 2018). Findings from this study may support Wright et al.'s (2014) call for further research into examining divergences in employee boundary management preferences and their relationship to perceived usefulness of communication technologies after regular work hours. The social inspiration may form organizations that foster separation of work and nonwork domains that may enable employees to effectively manage a healthy work-life balance to promote positive social change (Russo et al., 2016).

Methodological Implications

The qualitative transcendental phenomenological approach to this study aligned with the need to understand the phenomenon (Giorgi, 2014; Moustakas, 1994) of the constant pressure to monitor and immediately respond to the intrusiveness of work-related electronic communications into nonwork time. The phenomenological research method facilitated research efforts that allowed participants an opportunity to reflect and make sense of their experiences as they told their stories and provided thick descriptive data (Anney, 2014). Through phenomenological research, professional workers described their lived experiences and an interpretation of the findings (Schwandt, 2015) revealed the following six themes that are representative of their experiences: technological devices either provided an element of mobility or immobility, guarding personal time is a choice, concurrent management of work and life demands while at home, perception of expectation to be available, positive engagement with work, and a varied range of emotions.

As reviewed in Chapter 2, in their qualitative research study, Cavazotte et al. (2014) focused on a group of professionals' who were provided work-related smart phones by their employer to better understand how the use of corporate smart phones affected professionals as they performed their work, particularly taking notice of work intensification. Mazmanian et al. (2013) used a qualitative descriptive approach to contribute to the understanding of how and why workers elected to restrict their autonomy at work, revealing unintended negative consequences. The emergence of research (Cavazotte et al., 2014; Mazmanian et al., 2013) on professionals' use of information and communication technology has identified that professionals generally value innovative technologies for their functionalities, engage in ever-increasing communication patterns and in effect willingly assert themselves in work intensification.

The quantitative approach has been used to measure various aspects of work-related electronic communications during nonwork hours (Derks et al., 2015; Mellner, 2016). Derks et al. (2015) used quantitative multilevel data with recurrent measurements to examine the associations between daily work-related smartphone use and daily psychological detachment; and daily work-related exhaustion within a group of smartphone owners.

Theoretical Implications

Literature reviewed indicated that research on a diversified range of working professionals concerning electronic communications behavior and the balance of work and nonwork, was essentially in its earliest stages of expansion (Butts et al., 2015). The advent of information and communication technologies is considerably outpacing development, causing many overwhelming changes and gaps in knowledge to remain regarding after-hours availability (Boswell et al., 2016). Boundary and border theories were the primary lens for the conceptual framework. The conceptual framework adopted for this study included work-life balance, boundary and border theories, spillover theory, flexible work arrangements, information and communication technology, psychological implications, technostress, work-place telepressure, and psychological well-being with the aim of exploring professional worker' experiences. Boundary theory was conceptualized as segmented or integrated and border theory was conceptualized work and nonwork and asserted that individuals differed when it came to the extent that their dual home and work roles were either segmented or integrated (Ashforth et al., 2000; Clark, 2000; Nippert-Eng, 1996).

The theories, concepts, and assumptions that guided the endeavor of this research reflected through the conceptual framework (Miles et al., 2014). In Chapter 2, a review of the literature informed the findings of this research study. In the literature, Boswell et al. (2016) and Derks et al. (2015) suggested that the use of information and communication technologies during after-hours availability for work-related purposes may cause imbalances in employees work and nonwork domains that normally led to negative consequences. Elements of electronic communications behavior may also be determined to have an adverse effect on an employees' performance as research indicated for information and communication technology use (Boswell et al., 2016). Despite the temporal boundaries between work and nonwork, boundary and border theories provided a framework to raise awareness of how individuals construct and manage the boundaries. Futher studies may be conducted to bridge gaps in theoretical works using organizational role theory and extend research data on working professionals concerning the use of electronic communications and the balance of work and nonwork.

Practical Implications

In addition to the theoretical contributions, the findings are also beneficial in practice, since information and communication technological devices have become essential tools of numerous employees in various organizations. Employers supply information and communication technology devices to employees as a whole without bearing in mind how an employee's individual boundary management preference might affect their information and communication technology use during nonwork hours (Derks, Bakker, Peters, & van Wingerden, 2016). The research study may offer some organizational implications, which could be used to enhance some of the unintended consequences of information and communication technology use.

Results of this research study may have implications for researchers interested in boundary management and the role that electronic communications plays as a boundary object. The results might help in understanding ways in which electronic communications may influence boundary permeation, with implications for researchers and employers interested in work-life balance and organizational role theory policies. This study provided relevant support for the importance and consideration of an employee's boundary management preference on the relationship between work-related information and communication technology use during off-job times and work-family conflict. Organizational leaders should consider more than how often employees worked beyond their scheduled hours responding to electronic communications. Organizational leaders should consider employees' perceptions of the usefulness of electronic communication technologies (Derks et al., 2016). As reviewed in Chapter 2, findings of the Derks et al. (2014) study presented a weakness whereas supervisors did not provide a clear understanding of their expectations concerning smartphone use during off-job hours in that supervisors should not expect employees to available at any time.

Implications for this research study may have widespread significance in policy creation, organizational culture, designing appropriate professional development plans to help foster skills to manage work-life balance, and support the development of standards for best practice in all levels of management. Human Resources professionals and program managers can employ this information when deciding on policies regarding the distribution of information and communication technological devices. Information and communication technology use is not going away any time soon and will be prevalent in more than just organizations that normally are technology driven (Duranova & Ohly, 2016). In organizations like the federal government where working professionals have some type of flexible work arrangement, operating outside of the usual 5 days a week, 8:00am to 5:00pm work schedule, the establishment of an environment where employees understand what is expected of them and have clarity in their roles is crucial.

Conclusions

This was a qualitative transcendental phenomenological study. The findings described the experiences of federal government professional workers that felt compelled to be connected at all times and responded to the organizational needs using electronic mediated devices and whose work-life balance was affected negatively and positively. The phenomenological design was a good approach to elicit such behavior. The intent was to provide an opportunity for professional workers to share their stories, in their own words, and for me to gain an understanding into their lived experiences. Professional workers provided insight into how they experienced responding to electronic communications after-hours for work-related purposes, along with how after-hours availability affected balancing work and nonwork domains. The expectation for this research study is that the findings generate positve social change for an extensive range of professions, disciplines, and practices in addition to the management, leadership and organizational change professions. I expect that this research effort would bolster previous studies and prompt additional research because many gaps in knowledge continue regarding electronic communication behaviors and after-hours availability.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Date:___________________________

Your e-mail reply to my invitation confirming your consent to participate in this interview means you have met the prerequisites.

Participant Name / Code Name:
E-mail:
Phone:

Introductory Protocol
Hello, thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. I am Beulah Williams. This research study is in partial fulfillment of my doctoral degree at Walden University, in the School of Management, Leadership and Organizational Change.

The type of study I am conducting is called phenomenological. Phenomenology is a research paradigm which seeks to understand the essence of the experience being explored, as shared through the participants' stories.

My research study encompasses the impact of work-related electronic communications behaviors outside of normal working hours. I am trying to learn more about how a variety of connective technologies such as laptop computers, tablets, smartphones, the Internet, and Wi-Fi hotspots used for work-related purposes has extended the boundaries between work and nonwork for professional workers.

As a reminder, I was recording our session to aid me in my note taking. As indicated on the Consent Form, all transcribed audio recordings was encrypted with a code so that your name is not recorded and that you remain anonymous.

Establish Rapport
Before we get started with the formal questions,
Tell me something that you love about your job?

Let me take a few minutes to orient you to my research study. Recent research shows that connective technologies such as, laptop computers, tablets, or smartphones, the Internet, and Wi-Fi hotspots make it possible for employees to remain connected to the workplace, while not physically located at the workplace. Studies also show that the constant use of connective technologies for work-related purposes, after normal work hours has increasingly blurred the boundaries between work and nonwork. Studies further show that there is an expectation for professional workers to respond to employers beyond their scheduled work time and be available to work anytime with the use of some form of connective technology to complete work after normal working hours. Overall, increased organizational expectations of connectivity have changed the traditional, location and working hours boundaries between work and nonwork activities, and the complete ramifications of this change are unknown.

The intent of this interview is to gather data that will inform my research study based on how professional workers cope with the constant pressure to monitor and immediately respond to electronic communications such as e-mails, text messages, and possibly social media during nonwork hours for work-related purposes. Your perspectives and experiences may reveal best practices that employers may be able to use as they seek to implement or improve healthy work-life balance practices in their organizations.

Let's get started with the questions.

I have planned this interview to last no longer than one hour. I have several questions that I would like to cover. Please try to respond by telling a story that best describes your experiences. Please do not mention anyone by name when you are sharing your story.

Monitoring and Responding to Work-Related Messages: Let start by talking about monitoring and responding to work-related messages after normal working hours. Let me note, please frame your responses in the context of experiences related to after your normal working hours and for work-related purposes.

1. Tell me how computers, tablets, and/or smartphones are used for work-related purposes during your day to day personal activities away from the office.

2. Tell me about what you think your management expects with respect to responding or monitoring e-mail or text messages after hours.

3. Describe the reaction that you have when you hear that "you've got work-related mail" while you are off-the-clock.

4. Tell me about an experience that made you feel compelled to monitor and immediately respond to work-related messages when you were off-the-clock, outside of your normal working hours, using connective technology.

Work Life Balance Perceptions: Let's talk about Work Life Balance, which some researchers defined as to how you manage the multiple responsibilities that come with maintaining a job, family responsibilities, social life, school, and any other nonwork role you manage outside of your professional work.

1. In relation to an experience you had with working after-hours outside of your normal working hours, tell me how being always available and working after-hours impact you.

2. Tell me about how being always available using a laptop or smartphone affect your sleep, recovery, well-being, and psychological availability?

Post Interview Comments:

Before we close, what else could you add to help me understand the effects of responding to and monitoring after-hours e-mails and text messages?

Debrief Script:

Thank you again for participating and for helping me with my research study. After the transcription of the interview, I will contact you to schedule a telephonic follow-up session. The follow-up session should last no more than 30-minutes. This will be your opportunity to review the summary to affirm or correct my understanding of the message you want to convey.

Do you have any questions? Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Thank you!

Appendix B: Pilot Study Invitation Letter

Dear Pilot Study Participant,

I am Beulah Williams, a Ph.D. candidate in the Management program at Walden University. I am studying the impact of work-related electronic communications behavior outside of normal working hours. You are invited to participate in this doctoral research study that will explore the experiences of professional workers who have logged back in to work and responded to e-mails or text messages during nonwork time. The purpose of the pilot study interview is to review the interview protocol and identify any difficulties that could occur in the main study interviews and to help build my interviewing skills. The pilot study interview may last up to 60 minutes. I will use the interview protocol to address this study's research questions. The research questions that guided this research study were: What are the lived experiences of professional workers with the constant pressure to monitor and immediately respond to electronic communications after-hours for work-related purposes? How does after-hours availability impact work-life balance?

I need your help to complete this research study. As a pilot study participant, you will assist with the validation of the interview protocol. Pilot study participants will challenge and critique the research questions, check for: understanding, leading questions or biases, and content error. Pilot study participants will have a similar background with the main study participants. This invitation is being extended to you because you meet the research study's requirements. You are a general schedule (GS) 13-15, civilian government employee, a professional worker, and you have experienced logging back in to work and responding to e-mails or texts messages during unscheduled work hours. As a pilot study participant, you will serve in a voluntary role. There will not be any penalties or risk associated, if you decide not to participate and decline this invitation. As a pilot study participant, you will have the opportunity to discuss the questions and provide feedback at the conclusion of the interview.

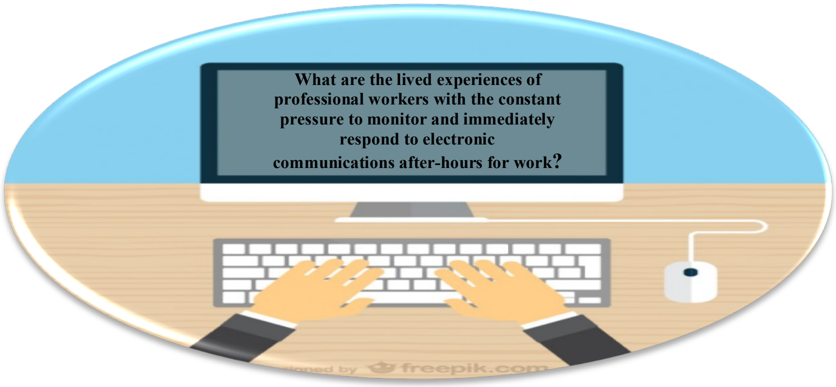
The Institutional Review Board approval number from Walden University for this research study is 09-18-18-0012184 and will expire on September 17, 2019. If you have any questions or concerns, before, during, or after the interview, please feel free to contact me at (xxx) xxx-xxxx. If you accept this invitation and are interested in taking part in the pilot study, please respond to me at bwillia2@waldenu.edu. I will forward you a copy of the Consent Form and schedule a time to conduct the pilot study interview with you.

Sincerely,

Beulah Williams, Ph.D. Candidate
Walden University
College of Management and Technology

Appendix C: Recruitment Flyer

Doctoral Research Study Participants Needed


What are the lived experiences of professional workers with the constant pressure to monitor and immediately respond to electronic communications after-hours for work?
Designed by freepik.com

You are invited to participate in a doctoral research study that will explore the experiences of professional workers who have logged back in to work and responded to e-mails or text messages during nonwork time.

To qualify you must:

- **Work for a government agency within the National Capital Region of Washington, DC, within the last five years**
- **Be a GS 13 – GS 15**
- **Have experienced logging back in to work and responding to e-mails or text messages during nonwork time**
- **Telework: have the option to telework at least one day a week**
- **18 years of age, minimum**

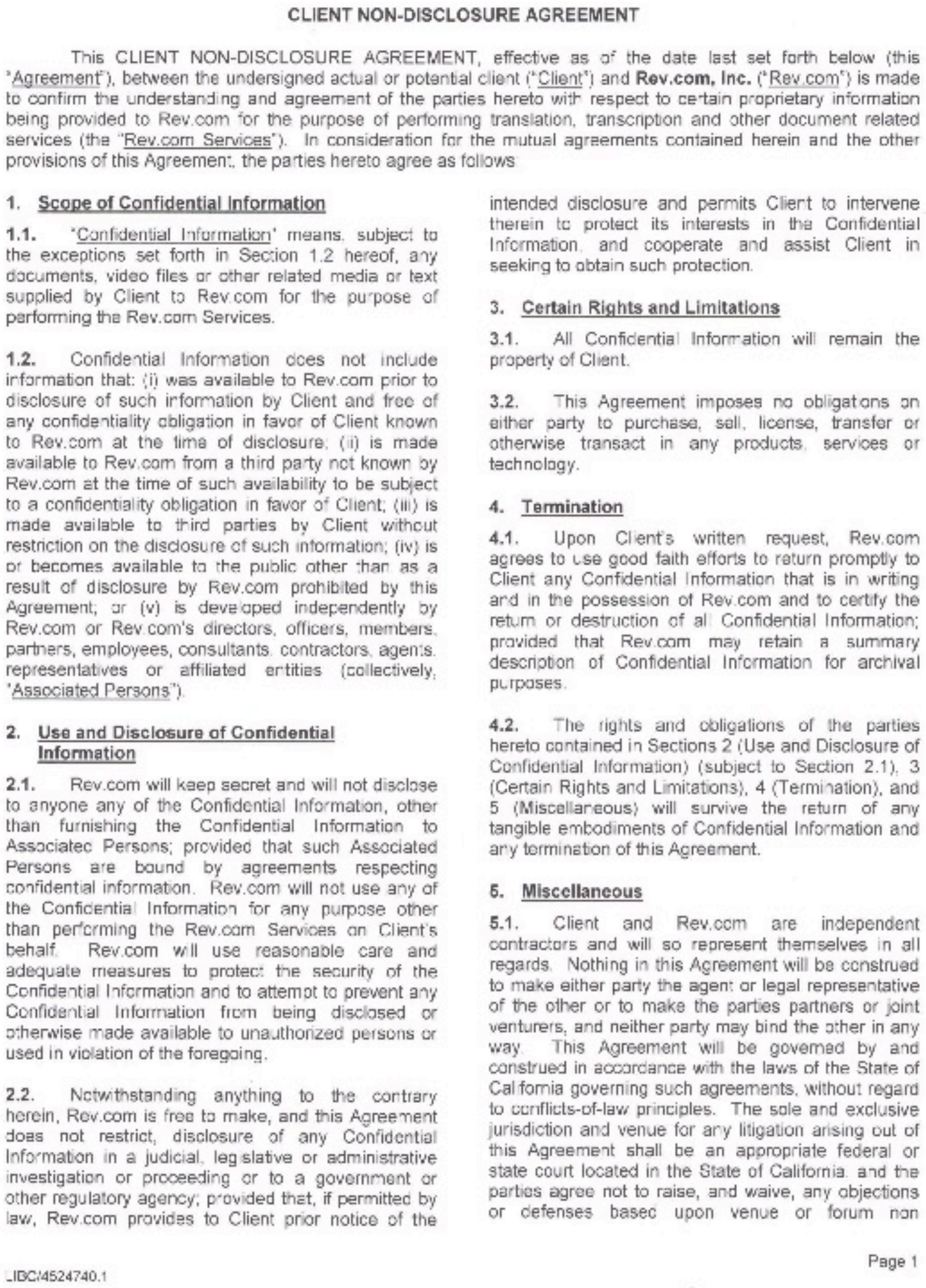
You will be asked to:

- **Sign a consent form required by Walden University's Institute Review Board**
- **Participate in a telephonic interview**
- **Recall your experiences and answer some questions about them**
- **Review a summary interpretation of your interview**

If interested and you qualify, please contact me by: October 30, 2018

Beulah L. Williams
Ph.D. Candidate
College of Management and Technology
Walden email.edu or call (xxx) xxx-xxxx (Redacted for Publication)

Appendix D: Client Nondisclosure Agreement



CLIENT NON-DISCLOSURE AGREEMENT

This CLIENT NON-DISCLOSURE AGREEMENT, effective as of the date last set forth below (this "Agreement"), between the undersigned actual or potential client ("Client") and **Rev.com, Inc.** ("Rev.com") is made to confirm the understanding and agreement of the parties hereto with respect to certain proprietary information being provided to Rev.com for the purpose of performing translation, transcription and other document related services (the "Rev.com Services"). In consideration for the mutual agreements contained herein and the other provisions of this Agreement, the parties hereto agree as follows:

1. Scope of Confidential Information

1.1. "Confidential Information" means, subject to the exceptions set forth in Section 1.2 hereof, any documents, video files or other related media or text supplied by Client to Rev.com for the purpose of performing the Rev.com Services.

1.2. Confidential Information does not include information that: (i) was available to Rev.com prior to disclosure of such information by Client and free of any confidentiality obligation in favor of Client known to Rev.com at the time of disclosure; (ii) is made available to Rev.com from a third party not known by Rev.com at the time of such availability to be subject to a confidentiality obligation in favor of Client; (iii) is made available to third parties by Client without restriction on the disclosure of such information; (iv) is or becomes available to the public other than as a result of disclosure by Rev.com prohibited by this Agreement; or (v) is developed independently by Rev.com or Rev.com's directors, officers, members, partners, employees, consultants, contractors, agents, representatives or affiliated entities (collectively, "Associated Persons").

2. Use and Disclosure of Confidential Information

2.1. Rev.com will keep secret and will not disclose to anyone any of the Confidential Information, other than furnishing the Confidential Information to Associated Persons; provided that such Associated Persons are bound by agreements respecting confidential information. Rev.com will not use any of the Confidential Information for any purpose other than performing the Rev.com Services on Client's behalf. Rev.com will use reasonable care and adequate measures to protect the security of the Confidential Information and to attempt to prevent any Confidential Information from being disclosed or otherwise made available to unauthorized persons or used in violation of the foregoing.

2.2. Notwithstanding anything to the contrary herein, Rev.com is free to make, and this Agreement does not restrict, disclosure of any Confidential Information in a judicial, legislative or administrative investigation or proceeding or to a government or other regulatory agency; provided that, if permitted by law, Rev.com provides to Client prior notice of the intended disclosure and permits Client to intervene therein to protect its interests in the Confidential Information, and cooperate and assist Client in seeking to obtain such protection.

3. Certain Rights and Limitations

3.1. All Confidential Information will remain the property of Client.

3.2. This Agreement imposes no obligations on either party to purchase, sell, license, transfer or otherwise transact in any products, services or technology.

4. Termination

4.1. Upon Client's written request, Rev.com agrees to use good faith efforts to return promptly to Client any Confidential Information that is in writing and in the possession of Rev.com and to certify the return or destruction of all Confidential Information; provided that Rev.com may retain a summary description of Confidential Information for archival purposes.

4.2. The rights and obligations of the parties hereto contained in Sections 2 (Use and Disclosure of Confidential Information) (subject to Section 2.1), 3 (Certain Rights and Limitations), 4 (Termination), and 5 (Miscellaneous) will survive the return of any tangible embodiments of Confidential Information and any termination of this Agreement.

5. Miscellaneous

5.1. Client and Rev.com are independent contractors and will so represent themselves in all regards. Nothing in this Agreement will be construed to make either party the agent or legal representative of the other or to make the parties partners or joint venturers, and neither party may bind the other in any way. This Agreement will be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of the State of California governing such agreements, without regard to conflicts-of-law principles. The sole and exclusive jurisdiction and venue for any litigation arising out of this Agreement shall be an appropriate federal or state court located in the State of California, and the parties agree not to raise, and waive, any objections or defenses based upon venue or forum non conveniens. This Agreement (together with any agreement for the Rev.com Services) contains the complete and exclusive agreement of the parties with respect to the subject matter hereof and supersedes all prior agreements and understandings with respect thereto, whether written or oral, express or implied. If any provision of this Agreement is held invalid, illegal or unenforceable by a court of competent jurisdiction, such will not affect any other provision of this Agreement, which will remain in full force and effect. No amendment or alteration of the terms of this Agreement will be effective unless made in writing and executed by both parties hereto. A failure or delay in exercising any right in respect to this Agreement will not be presumed to operate as a waiver, and a single or partial exercise of any right will not be presumed to preclude any subsequent or further exercise of that right or the exercise of any other right. Any modification or waiver of any provision of this Agreement will not be effective unless made in writing. Any such waiver will be effective only in the specific instance and for the purpose given.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties have caused this Agreement to be executed below by their duly authorized signatories.

CLIENT

Print Name ______________________

By __________________________
Name:
Title:
Date:

Address for notices to Client:

____
____
____
____

REV.COM, INC.

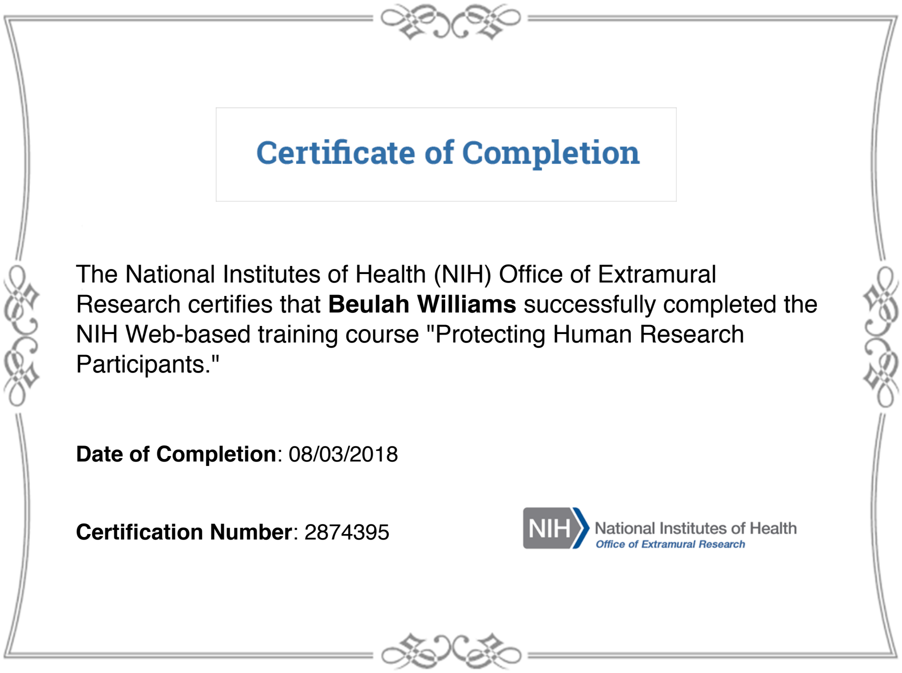
____

By Cheryl Brown
Name: Cheryl Brown
Title: Account Manager
Date: June 4, 2018

Address for notices to Rev.com, Inc.:

222 Kearny St
STE 800
San Francisco, CA 94108

Appendix E: National Institutes of Health Certification



Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that **Beulah Williams** successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course "Protecting Human Research Participants."

Date of Completion: 08/03/2018

Certification Number: 2874395

NIH National Institutes of Health
Office of Extramural Research

Appendix F: Demographic Data Sheet

Participant Background / Demographics

1. GS - 13 / 14 / 15:

2. Working Position Title (Director, Deputy, Chief, Manager, Supervisor, Team Lead, etc.):

3. Number of Days eligible to telework per work:

4. If you do not have regularly scheduled telework days, tell me what you are authorized to do (situational telework, ad hoc telework, etc.):

5. Number of Years in Position:

6. Number of Years with Government:

7. City & State of Employer:

8. Highest level of Education Completed:

9. Professional Certification(s):

10. Age Range (25-35 / 36-45 / 46-55 / 56-64):

11. Marital Status:

12. Male / Female