

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES  
Thesis/Project Report Sheet

Surname or Family name: **Harman**

First name: **Kerry**

Other name/s:

Abbreviation for degree as given in the University calendar: **MCom(Hons)Thesis Org Behvr**

School: **Industrial Relations and Organisational Behaviour**

Faculty: **Commerce and Economics**

Title: **An exploration of teleworker – manager work relationships in telework settings**

**Abstract 350 words maximum:**

New forms of work organisation such as telework, and more recently virtual teams and network organisations, suggest that distance work relationships will become increasingly widespread in the future. The aim of this thesis is to contribute to theory development in this relatively new area of study. The focus of this thesis is on the exploration of teleworker – manager work relationships in telework settings. A framework for exploring work relationships in telework settings was developed from the organisational behaviour and telework literature. This framework guided the design of the study and the analysis of the interview data. Interviews were conducted with six teleworker – manager sets in four different organisations in Australia. Unique stories from each of the cases have been compiled from the perspective of the teleworker and the perspective of the manager. An analysis of each of the teleworker – manager work relationships was undertaken using the concepts from the framework. The findings from the analysis have been used to develop grounded theory on teleworker – manager work relationships in telework settings.

The grounded theory proposes that when an employee commences telework that their work relationship with their manager shifts from an emphasis on performing and control behaviours (stage 1), to an emphasis on authority and autonomy behaviours (stage 2), and finally to an emphasis on commitment and support behaviours (stage 3). Of particular interest in this study is the notion of dual work systems; the newly established telework system and the existing work system of the employer organisation. In contrast to the existing domain of the employing organisation, the telework domain is established by the teleworker in a way that fits with their particular life circumstances. As a result, the teleworker and their manager operate two synchronous work relationships – the work relationship in the telework setting and the work relationship in the co-located setting. The dynamics found in the telework relationships in this study are related to the teleworker and their manager learning how to relate to each other within these dual work relationships.

**Declaration relating to disposition of project report/thesis**

I am fully aware of the policy of the University relating to the retention and use of higher degree project reports and theses, namely that the University retains the copies submitted for examination and is free to allow them to be consulted or borrowed. Subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968, the University may issue a project report or thesis in whole or in part, in photostat or microfilm or other copying medium.

I also authorise the publication by University Microfilms of a 350 word abstract in Dissertation Abstracts International (applicable to doctorates only).

.....  
Signature

.....  
Witness

Date

The University recognises that there may be exceptional circumstances requiring restrictions on copying or conditions on use. Requests for restriction for a period of up to 2 years must be made in writing to the Registrar. Requests for a longer period of restriction may be considered in exceptional circumstances if accompanied by a letter of support from the Supervisor of Head of School. Such requests must be submitted with the thesis/project report.

**FOR OFFICE USE ONLY**

Date of completion of requirements for Award:

Registrar and Deputy Principal

# An exploration of teleworker – manager work relationships in telework settings

**Kerry Harman**

B.A., Grad. Dip. in Applied Psychology

A thesis submitted for fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of  
Master of Commerce (Hons)

School of Industrial Relations and Organisational Behaviour  
University of New South Wales

## **Acknowledgements**

There are many people that need to be thanked for assisting me with the completion of this thesis. First, I would like to thank all the people who generously gave their time to participate in the study. This study required the commitment of teleworkers and their managers to a series of interviews over a period of time. This type of in-depth study could not have been undertaken without the interest and participation of these people.

I would also like to thank some people from the School of Industrial Relations and Organisational Behaviour at the University of New South Wales (UNSW). I want to thank my supervisor, Dr Allan Bordow, for his generous support and feedback during the entire project. Allan was always available to share his ideas and provide valuable input and direction to the study. He went well beyond the responsibilities of a supervisor by continuing to supervise my thesis well after his retirement from UNSW. This enabled me to maintain a consistency in the production of the thesis that may have otherwise been lost. I would also like to thank Tracy Wilcox, from, for her support and encouragement on the project. And finally Phil Bohle who provided feedback and a 'nudge' at the end to get this thesis over the line.

Finally, I need to thank those who have had to sometimes take a 'backseat' while I have been working on this project. Pia, thanks for being a loving and patient daughter. To my brother Ian, thanks for all your encouraging phone calls. And Erik, I certainly would not have been able to complete this project if I had not had your valuable feedback, ideas and word-processing expertise! but more importantly, your ongoing encouragement gave me the confidence that I could do this.

## Table of Contents

Chapter 1 – Introduction.....	1
1 Introduction - An Overview of Telework.....	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 What is Teleworking?.....	1
1.2.1 Is it new?.....	3
1.2.2 Telework perspectives.....	3
1.2.2.1 Summary of teleworking perspectives.....	5
1.3 The dynamics of the adoption of telework.....	5
1.3.1 Technology.....	5
1.3.2 Demographic changes.....	6
1.3.2.1 Labour Market Trends.....	6
1.3.2.1.1 More women in the workforce.....	6
1.3.2.1.2 An increase in ‘knowledge’ work.....	7
1.3.2.1.3 Deregulation of the labour market.....	7
1.3.2.2 Where people live.....	8
1.3.3 Social Change.....	8
1.3.4 Economic.....	9
1.3.5 Summary of the dynamics of the adoption of telework.....	10
1.4 Telework in Australia.....	10
1.5 An outline of this thesis.....	14
1.6 The scope of the thesis.....	16
Chapter 2 – The managing telework literature.....	17
2 The managing telework literature.....	17
2.1 Introduction.....	17
2.2 A costs/benefits perspective.....	17
2.2.1 Summary of cost/benefits perspective.....	18
2.3 Managing telework.....	19
2.3.1 Performance and Control.....	19
2.3.2 Authority and Autonomy.....	21
2.3.3 Trust.....	23
2.3.4 Commitment.....	24
2.3.5 Support.....	25
2.3.6 The work relationship in the telework setting.....	27
2.4 Conclusion.....	29
Chapter 3 – A model for exploring work relationships in telework settings.....	30
3 The Model.....	30
3.1 Introduction.....	30
3.2 Underlying assumptions guiding the traditional organisation of work.....	30
3.3 The development of work relationships in co-located settings.....	34
3.4 A framework for exploring telework relationships.....	36
3.5 Conclusion.....	37
Chapter 4 – Methodology.....	38
4 Methodology.....	38
4.1 Introduction.....	38
4.2 The interpretive approach.....	38
4.3 The case study method.....	39
4.3.1 Inductive versus deductive approaches.....	39

4.4	Research Design.....	42
4.4.1	Stage 1 – Introduction to the field.....	42
4.4.2	Stage 2 – Introductory interviews with teleworker – manager sets.....	43
4.4.3	Stage 3 – In-depth case study interviews.....	44
4.4.3.1	Selection of cases.....	46
4.4.3.1.1	Bounding the territory.....	46
4.4.3.1.2	Gaining access to cases.....	47
4.4.3.1.3	Number of cases.....	48
4.4.3.2	Stage 3 - research procedure.....	48
4.4.3.2.1	Initial design.....	48
4.4.3.2.2	Modified Research design.....	49
4.4.3.2.3	The group interviews.....	49
4.5	Analysis.....	51
4.6	Limitations of the research design.....	52
4.6.1	Access.....	52
4.6.2	Case study method.....	53
4.7	Overall summary.....	54
Chapter 5 – Analysis.....		55
5	Analysis.....	55
5.1	Introduction.....	55
5.2	Part 1: the teleworker – manager cases.....	55
5.2.1	Colin and John.....	57
5.2.1.1	Background information.....	57
5.2.1.2	Descriptions of the interaction between John and Colin.....	57
5.2.1.3	The work relationship from the perspective of the manager.....	61
5.2.1.4	The work relationship from the perspective of the teleworker.....	67
5.2.1.5	Summary.....	71
5.2.2	Greg, Rebecca and Tania.....	72
5.2.2.1	Background information.....	72
5.2.2.1.1	Tania.....	72
5.2.2.1.2	Rebecca.....	72
5.2.2.1.3	Greg.....	72
5.2.2.2	Descriptions of the interaction between Greg, Tania and Rebecca..	73
5.2.2.3	The work relationship from the perspective of the teleworker - Tania	75
5.2.2.4	The work relationship from the perspective of the teleworker - Rebecca	81
5.2.2.5	The work relationship from the perspective of the manager.....	87
5.2.2.6	Summary.....	90
5.2.2.6.1	Tania and Greg.....	91
5.2.2.6.2	Rebecca and Greg.....	91
5.2.2.6.3	Greg, Rebecca and Tania.....	92
5.2.3	Peter and Cath.....	93
5.2.3.1	Background information.....	93
5.2.3.2	Descriptions of the interaction between Peter and Cath.....	93
5.2.3.3	The work relationship from the perspective of the manager.....	96
5.2.3.4	The work relationship from the perspective of the teleworker.....	103
5.2.3.5	Summary.....	106
5.2.4	Anne, Leanne and Jennifer.....	108
5.2.4.1	Background information.....	108

5.2.4.2	Descriptions of the interaction between Anne, Leanne and Jennifer	109
5.2.4.3	The work relationship from the perspective of the teleworkers	113
5.2.4.4	The work relationship from the perspective of the manager	124
5.2.4.5	Summary	127
5.3	Part 2: an analysis of the work relationships using the model	129
5.3.1	The model re-visited	129
5.3.2	Colin (teleworker) and John (manager)	130
5.3.3	Tania (teleworker) and Greg (manager)	132
5.3.4	Rebecca (teleworker) and Greg (manager)	133
5.3.5	Peter (teleworker) and Cath (manager)	134
5.3.6	Leanne, Jennifer (teleworkers) and Anne (manager)	135
5.4	Establishing the robustness of the model	136
Chapter 6 – Grounded Theory		139
6	Grounded Theory	139
6.1	Introduction	139
6.2	Theorising work relationship dynamics in telework settings	139
6.3	Limitations of the present study and implications for further research	145
6.3.1	Sampling issues	145
6.3.2	The underlying assumptions of the framework	147
6.3.3	The limitations of the methodology	148
6.4	Conclusion	149
References		152
References		153
Appendix A	- Preliminary Interview Schedule - Human Resource Managers	161
Appendix B	- Interview guide for Managers	164
Appendix C	- Advertisement	166
Appendix D	- Press Release	167
Appendix E	- Email questions - manager	168
Appendix F	- Description of the monthly face-to-face meetings compiled by Anne, Leanne and Jennifer	170
Appendix G	- Work Relationships and Performance	172

## List of Figures

Figure 2-1	Key concepts from the managing telework literature.....	20
Figure 3-1	A framework for exploring teleworker manager work relationships.....	36
Figure 4-1	Initial Research Design.....	49
Figure 5-1	A model for exploring teleworker-manager relationships in telework settings.....	129
Figure 5-2	The stages of the teleworker – manager work relationships in relation to the model.....	131
Figure 6-1	Grounded theory model.....	145

## List of Tables

Table 1-1	Organisational demographics at Hewlett Packard.....	6
Table 1-2	New opportunities enabled by IT.....	10
Table 2-1	Summary of empirical research on benefits of telework.....	17
Table 2-2	Summary of empirical research on costs of telework.....	18
Table 2-3	Norms based on traditional assumptions about time and space in organisations.....	21
Table 4-1	Comparison of interpretive and positivist approaches.....	39
Table 4-2	Process of Building Theory from Case Study Research.....	40
Table 4-3	Preliminary Interviews conducted at these organisations.....	42
Table 4-4	Introductory Interviews with teleworker - manager sets.....	44
Table 4-5	Timetable of interviews.....	45
Table 5-1	Summary of interviews.....	56
Table 6-1	What aspects of your work relationship do you think are important to help you perform your job more effectively?.....	172

## CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

### 1 Introduction - An Overview of Telework

#### 1.1 Introduction

New forms of work organisation such as telework, and more recently virtual teams and network organisations, suggest that distance work relationships will become increasingly widespread in the future. The aim of this thesis is to contribute to theory development in this relatively new area of study. The focus of this thesis is on the exploration of teleworker – manager work relationships in telework settings.

This chapter introduces the topic of telework. First, some definitions and descriptions of telework will be provided. Next, a general introduction to the topic is provided by overviewing key themes in the telework literature. This section explores the dynamics associated with the adoption of telework using the categories of: technological, demographic, social and economic change. It will be argued that a closer investigation of the literature which explores telework at the level of the workplace is needed in order to better understand the dynamics associated with the adoption of telework by organisations. An overview is then provided of the extent of telework in Australia. Finally, this chapter provides the outline of the thesis. The research problem is introduced and a brief outline of each of the chapters is provided.

#### 1.2 What is Teleworking?

Many writers comment on the difficulty of defining what telework actually is (eg Huws, 1988; HYPIT Project, 1996). Definitions range from very specific, for example:

*‘Teleworking’ means the agreed, regular performance of work related tasks for an agreed number of employment hours per week, as a substitute for commuting to the primary office, which performance utilises telecommunications technology, in a home-based office (Commonwealth Public Service Union, 1994, p. 2).*



To very broad:

*the point of convergence between several different trends currently affecting the organisation of work* (Huws, 1988, p. 61).

The former definition implies a work relationship between an employer and an employee, where the employee spends part of the working week at home. This type of telework, where the commute to work is replaced by working at home, is known as telecommuting. The latter definition includes broader concepts such as virtual organisation. A virtual organisation may take many forms, an example being a temporary virtual network that is formed to exploit new market opportunities (McLoughlin & Jackson, 1997).<sup>1</sup>

In attempting to describe telework, McGrath and Houlihan (1998) point out that telework's 'multiple manifestations' are one of its defining features. For example, the term telework can be applied to the following situations:

- Homework – where work is carried out at home. This can include telecommuters, who work for one employer, or contract workers who may work for more than one employer.
- Nomadic or mobile staff – staff who are no longer office based and spend much of the workday with their customers. This category often includes sales staff that use telecommunications technology to enhance their mobile operations.
- Satellite offices – decentralised offices that are linked electronically to the central office. A local example is the RTA office at Gosford, NSW, that is equipped so that RTA personnel who live in the Gosford region can use the facilities at this local office rather than commuting to Sydney each day.

Other defining features of telework described by the above authors are:

- flexible location and employment status
- usually supported by advanced information and communication technologies

---

<sup>1</sup> See Davidow and Malone (1992); Snow, Miles and Coleman (1992); and Martin (1996) for detail on virtual organisations.

- primarily concerned with service type activities and therefore highly information intensive

### *1.2.1 Is it new?*

Although telework is viewed as a relatively recent phenomenon, some of its characteristics are not so new, such as contracting, mobile work and homebased work. Some people have always worked at a distance from their employer, for example more mobile occupations such as sales and service/repair staff, while others have been involved in home-based work, for example, ‘outworkers’ in the clothing industry, writers, journalists, artists, and some clerical workers. However, these types of work arrangements have received little attention in the organisational literature, perhaps not being considered mainstream enough to warrant the attention of organisational researchers. Probert (1988) supports this view claiming that in economic terms, homebased work has been considered peripheral to the economies of advanced industrial societies.

### *1.2.2 Telework perspectives*

The most prevalent image of telework is that presented in many mainstream magazines, newspapers and internet articles. The popular press tend to present the ‘hyped-up’ version of telework, that is, the way new technology will vastly improve our working lives (eg Freeman, 1998; Lonsdale, 1998; Newman, 1997). The vision presented is of the teleworker, often by the pool or at the beach with their laptop, completing their work in luxurious surroundings. While these media accounts encompass a strong element of fantasy, they reflect a theme adopted by some organisational theorists that telework will contribute to improved work conditions.

Perhaps the best known account of this optimistic teleworking future is Toffler’s (1980) image of the electronic cottage. Toffler claimed that the electronic cottage, where workers worked from home using distance communication technology, would liberate workers from the alienation of the industrial model of work organisation. This vision has been promoted more recently by Celente (1995), who says that a move from going to the office to telecommuting will shift the focus of our daily lives from the workplace to the home and local community. He says that teleworking will provide:

- more flexibility in organising the family

- children with a better grasp of what work is about as they will be able to see their parents working at home
- a greater sense of community spirit as we will be reminded of our local surroundings and our local community when we are working at home

Celente's view is based on many assumptions including: existing activities that are already undertaken at home are not work, for example unpaid domestic labour; that the geographic area in which one resides is a pleasant environment; and that elements of community exist in this geographic area.

In contrast, a less optimistic view associates telework with an erosion of working conditions and a reduction in job security. For example, some forms of telework may have the same problems that are typically associated with outwork. Outworking can reduce wage costs by isolating workers and preventing unionisation (Probert & Wajcman, 1988). This has led to the resistance by some unions in the UK to the introduction of telework (Horner & Day, 1995).

Another concern associated with telework is the emergence of two distinct groups of teleworkers: the well educated professionals with secure salaries, for example, management consultants and systems analysts; and the peripheral, temporarily contracted female clerical workers (Hamblin, 1995; Olson & Primps, 1984; Weijers, Meijer, & Spoelman, 1992).

Telework also enables employers to access cheaper labour by sending work 'offshore'. This is a growing trend for information processing work (Bibby, 1997) and software development (Wood et al., 1998). Businesses are increasingly outsourcing text entry and keyboard work to countries such as Jamaica, where data entry wages are less than 50% of the wages paid in the USA. For even lower costs, this type of work is sent to the People's Republic of China (Bibby, 1997). Similar trends are occurring in the IT industry with hardware and software development being outsourced to countries where lower wages are paid. Wood (1998) notes the advantages gained by companies such as Texas Instruments who use low-cost engineers and computer programmers from India in their product development teams. Another recent phenomenon reported in the popular press has been the establishment of off-shore call centres where operators seamlessly take customer calls and handle customer enquiries (eg Corcoran, 2001).

Telework may also contribute to the general trend of people working longer hours (Australian Centre for Industrial Relations Research and Training, 1999). Teleworking can contribute to the difficulty in separating the boundaries between work and home (Kurland & Bailey, 1999). The physical and psychological boundaries of the workplace are no longer present in home-based telework settings and this can lead to an increase in the total time spent on work. For example, teleworkers frequently report working longer days as they often work during the time that they would have been commuting to and from the office (RTA, 1997).

### **1.2.2.1 Summary of teleworking perspectives**

In conclusion, the contrasting reports of telework make it difficult to forecast whether the future will be optimistic or pessimistic and it is not the intention to debate this issue in this research thesis. The intent of introducing these perspectives is to provide a broader picture of telework, and to highlight that it may have different meanings to different people. Huws, Korte, & Robinson (1990), researchers on telework in Europe, have commented on the contrasting perspectives. They say that one perspective argues that it breaks down hierarchies and loosens centralised control; the other perspective suggests that telework intensifies Taylorist methods of control of work process by making tasks routine and disciplining by payment by results systems.

## **1.3 The dynamics of the adoption of telework**

An introduction to the topic of telework can be gained by reviewing literature that focuses on the dynamics associated with the adoption of telework. This literature focuses on telework from a macro perspective and can be grouped into the categories of technological, demographic, social and economic change. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss these ideas in detail but they are introduced to provide you with an overview of the themes associated with the topic of telework.

### **1.3.1 Technology**

Continuing rapid innovation and convergence of computing and telecommunications technologies, including the digitisation of voice, image, text, and data, and the developments in ISDN and the broadband telecommunications infrastructure, provide the technological base for the widespread use of teleworking (Abel, 1990; Horner & Day, 1995). Associated developments in software applications, such as groupware, enable project work to be less dependent on location (Abel, 1990; Berry, 1996). In this respect,

groupware may facilitate telework as it enables members of project teams who may have previously been required to work at a central location because of the group nature of the project, to move to distant locations. Project teams can be formed around the globe and businesses are benefiting from the competitive advantage this can provide (Lipnack & Stamps, 1999; Skyrme, 1994; Wood et al., 1998).

More extensive information on computing hardware and software, and its implications for telework, can be found in engineering and IT literature, for example the Computing & Control Engineering Journal, British Telecommunications Engineering and Journal of Information Science. While technological factors are often put forward as the key drivers of telework (Huws et al., 1990), it is argued in this thesis that we need to look beyond a technological determinist argument when considering the adoption of telework in work organisations. An important theme in this thesis is that the social issues surrounding the adoption of telework need to be further explored, particularly at the level of work relationships in the workplace.

### 1.3.2 Demographic changes

#### 1.3.2.1 Labour Market Trends

##### 1.3.2.1.1 More women in the workforce

In Australia, women comprise 44% of the labour force (*6359.0 Forms of Employment, Australia, 2002*). This, combined with an aging population, has resulted in a workforce where more people, both male and female, have caring responsibilities. Similar trends are occurring in much of Europe and the USA. For example, the organisational demographics from Hewlett Packard in America demonstrate the shifts taking place in American workplaces (see Table 1-1). These shifts include an increasing percentage of women in the workforce, with many having childcare or eldercare responsibilities.

Table 1-1 Organisational demographics at Hewlett Packard\*

Women comprise 46% of the work force up from 33 percent in 1960
60% come from families where both spouses work up from 34 percent in 1960
21% report themselves as having child care responsibilities, compared to 14% in the base period
25% have responsibilities for caring for elder parents
Approximately one fourth of those employees report having their parents living with them

\* adapted from Platt (1995)

Berry (1996) believes that these demographic changes, when combined with a shortage of skilled staff, will mean that employers will have to offer more flexible ways of working. Employers can use telework as a way of providing more flexible working conditions for employees (Breakspear, 1998) and many teleworkers report the benefit of increased flexibility as a result of teleworking (British Telecommunications, 1994; DIR, 1996; RTA, 1996; Westpac, 1996).

#### *1.3.2.1.2 An increase in 'knowledge' work*

An increasing number of people are employed in 'information' industries including finance, research, communications, and higher education. Over 50% of employment in Europe involves information management (Johnston, 1995). The shift in the types of work that people do may facilitate an increase in telework as some workers no longer need to be physically present in a central office for production to take place. Teleworkers often report that the *type* of work they do enables them to telework ("Working from home," 1996).

#### *1.3.2.1.3 Deregulation of the labour market*

The deregulation of the Australian labour market has led to increases in labour flexibility for employers in terms of job tasks, working hours, and employment contracts. Large sections of the Australian workforce have been 'casualised', with one in four employees now a casual worker (*Special Article - Casual employment (Jul, 1999)*, 1999). Some authors consider the encouragement and growth of telework to be part of the growing trend in the casualisation of work (Dawson & Turner, 1989).

Deregulation has enabled organisations to implement human resource strategies that focus on financial and numerical flexibility (Nankervis, Compton, & McCarthy, 1999). These strategies may encourage the use of telework. For example, an emphasis on financial flexibility provides an outcomes based focus and it is argued that this culture is required for the success of telework programs (Harrington & Ruppel, 1999). Likewise, an emphasis on numerical flexibility in the workplace might encourage the use of telework as a way of organising work as teleworking contractors can be taken up or reduced with relative ease, depending on organisational requirements. These changes are related to economic factors and are discussed in more detail in section 1.3.4, p. 9.

### **1.3.2.2 Where people live**

Longer daily commutes and increased traffic on the roads have become the norm in many large cities (eg Henley Report, 1988). Berry (1996) points out that commuting an hour a day, to and from the workplace, takes up 440 hours of a commuter's life each year. This is the equivalent of 11 working weeks. Telecommuting reduces the time spent on daily commuting (British Telecommunications, 1994; DIR, 1996; RTA, 1996; Weijers et al., 1992) and is often reported by teleworkers as a reason for starting to telecommute. In a survey of Australian workers (RTA, 1997) it was found that on average 6 hours per week travel time could be saved by teleworking.

### **1.3.3 Social Change**

Attitudes toward working itself are changing (Handy, 1995a; Toffler, 1980). People are requiring more flexible employment options, partly as a result of the significant strains that arise from trying to work and assume caring responsibilities simultaneously. The need for greater flexibility is also associated with the greater value being placed on the quality of working life and improved lifestyle. For example, Blanc (1988) says that a lot of people want to choose for themselves what hours and days of the week they work. Berry (1996, p. 6) points out that people may no longer be content to be “mere cogs in huge hierarchical corporations” and that businesses will have to offer more imaginative contracts for work in order to attract and retain top performers.

Studies have found that telework assists with the recruitment & retention of staff (HYPIT Project, 1996; Skyrme, 1994; Weijers et al., 1992; Zeytinoglu, 1994). Telework may also address a variety of quality of work life issues. For example, various studies have found that telework increases: satisfaction at work, motivation, family time and improved home life, self esteem, and autonomy; and reduces stress (see Table 2-1, p. 17). In this respect, telework may be viewed by human resource departments as a flexible workplace strategy that addresses both employee and organisational needs (Breakspear, 1998).

Changing attitudes toward the environment are also having an impact on the adoption of telework. For example, concerns with rising air pollution levels in cities, largely contributed to by commuter traffic, have led to a variety of teleworking trials, especially in the US. Legislation has been introduced in the State of California that requires that organisations with more than 100 employees introduce programs to help reduce commuter traffic. An option offered to organisations under the legislation is the

introduction of teleworking programs (Handy & Mokhtarian, 1995). Reducing commuter traffic has the added benefits of reducing: road maintenance, time spent on travelling to and from work, and stress associated with lengthy delays in heavy traffic (Belson, 1994).

#### 1.3.4 *Economic*

Increased competition caused by saturated markets for standardised products, market deregulation, and the increased pace of technological developments (Makridakis, 1995), has resulted in many organisations implementing widespread change in order to increase their flexibility, reduce costs, increase productivity and improve customer service (Stace & Dunphy, 1994). Many organisational theorists argue that a rigid, highly bureaucratised organisational model is no longer effective in gaining competitive advantage (eg Davidow & Malone, 1992; Drucker, 1988; Martin, 1996; Snow et al., 1992). These scholars view structural change as an inevitable adaptation to a rapidly changing environment. Advocates for telework have taken up this argument. For example, Johnston (1995) states in *Telework '95*<sup>2</sup> that, in an effort to increase flexibility, organisations are moving away from a mass production paradigm emphasising concentration and centralisation. This push toward greater flexibility has generated interest in the possibilities offered by teleworking as an alternative way of organising work. Numerous studies have found that telework can play an important part in making organisations more productive and cost effective, as well as providing improved customer service (see Table 2-1, p. 17).

For example, Skyrme (1994), and Lynch and Skelton (1995) propose that teleworking represents a major opportunity for businesses to achieve flexibility and responsiveness, and reduce costs. They say that information technology (IT) offers strategic opportunities for those who exploit it and its use will increasingly differentiate an organisation from its competitors. IT facilitates the implementation of flexible working practices which in turn address business considerations such as cost competitiveness, improved customer service and increased responsiveness (see Table 1-2).

---

<sup>2</sup> An annual report which provides an update of telework activities and research in Europe.



Table 1-2 New opportunities enabled by IT \*

New opportunities enabled by IT	
global connectivity	people around the world can access common data, send messages and files to each other, and work co-operatively together
collapse of time and distance	many business activities, particularly those that are information intensive, can take place over vast distances and without time delays
displacement of time	many activities that currently need the simultaneous presence of two or more people (eg a meeting or telephone conversation) can take place at different times by using computer storage

\* adapted from Skyrme (1994, p. 99)

### 1.3.5 Summary of the dynamics of the adoption of telework

This section introduced literature which overviews the various factors contributing to the adoption of telework by organisations. While the trends discussed in this literature suggest that the adoption of telework should now be widespread, this way of organising work has not been adopted widely in Australian workplaces (eg Tamrat, Vilkinas, & Warren, 1997). The next section of this chapter introduces research that has been conducted in Australia on telework.

## 1.4 Telework in Australia

A report has been recently published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) which provides some useful statistical data on teleworking in NSW (*Teleworking: New South Wales*, 2002). The data gathered for the report was collected during August to October in 2001. According to the ABS statistics, 8% of NSW workers teleworked during the three-month period. This figure suggests a reasonable number of people are teleworking, and fits with the trends predicted in the popular press. However, when we look at the definition for teleworking used in the survey, this figure may not reflect the number of people teleworking on a regular basis. Teleworkers were defined as ‘any employed person, who worked at a fixed workplace, for a business that was not based at their own home and in the last three months had worked at home during normal business hours for a full or part day’ (*Teleworking: New South Wales*, 2002, p. 19). Therefore, workers who might work at home occasionally, even only for part of the day, would be included in this report as teleworkers. The number of people teleworking who have a formal agreement with their employer may be a more accurate indication of the number of people

teleworking on a regular basis. This figure is much lower (1.5%)<sup>3</sup> and suggests that it may be some time before telework becomes the ‘norm’ in workplaces in Australia.

The key findings from the report are provided in the following summary. The majority of teleworkers surveyed in the study lived in Sydney (72%), and 58% were male and 42% were female. Although approximately 79% of all employed workers in NSW work in the private sector, a smaller proportion of private sector employees teleworked (7%), compared with government or public service employees (10%). The main reasons for teleworking were: work commitments/job requires it (33%), less distractions (15%), childcare/family considerations (13%) and greater productivity (12%). Almost half of all teleworkers (47%) said they would like to telework more often. The most common reasons for not teleworking were: type of work is not suitable (63%), employers not allowing it (14%) and lack of equipment (12%).

The above survey was requested by the NSW Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) as they are interested in examining the impact of teleworking on reduced traffic congestion, as well as the social and economic benefits that it may provide (*Teleworking*, 2002). The RTA have piloted their own telework program and have compiled an extensive two volume report (RTA, 1996). The RTA study investigated the impact of teleworking on productivity, worker satisfaction and travel behaviour. Seventy-seven teleworkers, fifty-five supervisors, twenty-eight control group members, and ninety-nine household members participated in a teleworking pilot for six months. It was found that:

- teleworkers were more productive because there were less distractions in the home office and because they tended to work longer hours
- teleworking significantly reduced travel by teleworkers
- the reduction in face-to-face contact adversely impacted on the discussion of targets and feedback on job performance between teleworker and supervisor
- teleworkers reported benefits such as improved organisational skills, improved concentration and focus, raised self-esteem, greater confidence, reduced stress, more flexibility, fewer distractions and interruptions, more comfortable environment, more family time, and reduced travelling time and cost

---

<sup>3</sup> This figure was obtained by personal communication with the ABS, Sydney office. It was not published in the report as it has a high standard error and should be used with caution.

- supervisors reported that their staff were more self-reliant, happier, and that the advantages of teleworking outweigh the disadvantages and were willing to continue teleworking as a work option for their group

Other Australian-based research on telework includes a report conducted by Westpac on their telework pilot program (Westpac, 1996). An interesting excerpt from this report (p. 4) introduces the issue of trust, a theme that will be explored further in the current research:

*In Westpac the issue of trust is as much an issue as for other organisations in Australia. The culture of Westpac is one of being seen to work long hours, traditionally command and control style of management, limited communication and career progression based on networks and identifying opportunities through the grapevine. Yet business drivers are forcing Westpac to consider the need for flexibility of work-place to meet customer demands. Examples of this can be found by the mobility and home office arrangements of Westpac's mobile-managers and home-finance managers.*

A more recent study has been undertaken by Meyers and Hearn (2000). This study begins to address the lack of qualitative research on teleworking in Australia by conducting interviews with teleworkers on their communication in the telework setting. They found that overall teleworkers were satisfied with telework as it contributed to improved work and lifestyle outcomes. However, they also identified a lack of management support for teleworking. They suggest that managerial competencies need to be developed in terms of managing in virtual work settings. They also call for further research on individual communication competencies and organisational support systems in telework settings.

Another major study of telework in Australia has been undertaken by a group of researchers from the University of Queensland in collaboration with industry partners that employ regular<sup>4</sup> teleworkers. This research consisted of a national survey of over 2,500

---

<sup>4</sup> In this research 'regular' teleworkers were defined as those who worked at least 40% of their total hours away from the office.

Australian organisations to establish teleworking trends as well as more in-depth case study research. The results of the survey research indicated little use of telework in Australian organisations across various industry sectors (Lafferty & Whitehouse, 2000). But of those sectors that did employ teleworkers, the communications services industry employed the highest percentage of teleworkers. The highest percentage of teleworkers were found in the occupational group of ‘managers’. The researchers found that the most frequently reported perceived advantage of telework by organisations that have workers who regularly telework was higher productivity. The most frequently reported perceived problems were concerns about data security and lack of support from staff and unions. However, the survey was completed by Human Resource managers from the responding organisations and the perceived advantages and disadvantages of telework may have differed if other perspectives had been included. The researchers suggested that more detailed case study research be undertaken which further explored the perceived problems associated with telework.

The case study stage of the project involved interviews and focus groups with senior managers, telework supervisors and teleworkers (Whitehouse, Diamond, & Lafferty, 2002). The interview data was analysed using the broad themes of ‘productivity’ and ‘work and family’, two areas identified by the researchers where telework could offer potential benefits. While both the teleworkers and their supervisors reported greater productivity as a result of the implementation of telework, the researchers concluded that this was a complex issue where long term sustainability issues needed to be considered in relation to the short term productivity gains that telework provides. As for the potential for telework to address work and family issues, the ambivalent character of telework, where teleworkers report greater autonomy but also often work longer hours, means that telework may exacerbate some problems associated with balancing work and family. The researchers conclude that the implementation of telework in organisations needs to be supplemented with adequate policies and evaluation to ensure that the potential benefits of telework for employees are not eroded by an increase in work intensification. This study highlights the need for more research on ‘the organisational impacts of telework, including those affecting teleworkers, managers, supervisors and non-teleworkers’ (p. 267).

## 1.5 An outline of this thesis

The literature reviewed in the previous sections of this chapter provides an overview of telework and introduces factors that have contributed to the adoption of telework. This literature considers telework from a macro perspective. However, in order to gain further insight on the dynamics associated with the adoption of telework by organisations, an investigation of the literature at the level of the workplace needs to be undertaken. An exploration of this literature is undertaken in Chapter 2.

The literature on managing telework is examined in Chapter 2. This literature emphasises the importance of the teleworker – manager work relationship. While teleworker – manager relationships are considered central to the success of telework, there has been little empirical research which explores these work relationships. I argue in this thesis that a better understanding of work relationships between managers and their subordinates in a telework context is needed in order to understand the complexity of the dynamics associated with the development of telework. Therefore, the research problem being explored in this thesis is:

*How do teleworker – manager work relationships develop in telework settings?*

A working model has been developed for exploring the research problem and this is described in Chapter 3. The model links key concepts from the managing telework literature with literature on the development of work relationships. The key concepts used in this research for exploring teleworker – manager work relationships in telework settings are the negotiation of performance and control, autonomy and authority, and commitment and support, and the development of trust.

The way the research has been carried out is described in Chapter 4, Methodology. This chapter discusses the underlying assumptions guiding the interpretive approach used in this research and the reasons for adopting a case study design. Issues associated with validity are discussed in this chapter, along with the strategies implemented in the current study to provide a plausible account of teleworker – manager relationships in telework settings.

An analysis of the interviews conducted with teleworkers and their managers is undertaken in Chapter 5, Analysis. This chapter is divided into two parts. In Part 1, the teleworker – manager cases are represented from the perspective of the teleworker and the perspective of the manager. In Part 2, the concepts from the model developed in Chapter 3 are used to analyse the teleworker – manager work relationships.

Finally, in Chapter 6 a grounded theory is developed which offers an explanation for the development of work relationships in telework settings as found in the present study. The work relationship between the teleworker and their manager shifts through three stages when the employee commences teleworking. In each of these stages particular work relationship behaviours are expressed by the teleworker and their manager. The grounded theory explains why these particular behaviours are emphasised at each stage and why the work relationship shifts from stage 1 to stage 2, and from stage 2 to stage 3. The thesis concludes by considering the limitations of the present study and the implications for further research.

## 1.6 The scope of the thesis

It is important to locate this thesis within a particular disciplinary area and a particular research perspective. This thesis draws on literature from the field of organisational behaviour. While this field is to some degree multidisciplinary, and draws on sociological, psychological and political literature, the field tends to be heavily influenced by human relations and neo-human relations literature. I recognise that there are many questions and approaches that could have been taken up by drawing more on the sociological and political literature. However, all theses have boundaries, and the boundaries I have drawn around this study contain it within the more micro approach emphasised in organisational behaviour studies.

Similarly, the methodological approach adopted also needs to be located. It is definitely a hybrid methodology that is in part based on a grounded theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), but that also includes more focus at the outset of the study than in grounded theory through the inclusion of a provisional working model. Those who are grounded theory purists will probably be offended by the structure imposed by the model. Those who have no empathy to a grounded theory approach will also be offended as this study does not follow the tight structure of a positivist approach which seeks to prove hypotheses. Instead a hybrid approach has been employed in order to take advantage of the ‘inductiveness’ offered by grounded theory, while keeping the study bounded by using a theoretical framework.

## CHAPTER 2 – THE MANAGING TELEWORK LITERATURE

### 2 The managing telework literature

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores telework at the level of the workplace. I have grouped the literature in this chapter into two areas: i) literature that examines telework from a cost/benefits perspective, and ii) the managing telework literature. There are overlaps across these two categories in terms of the issues that arise; nevertheless, I have grouped the literature into separate categories to indicate differences in the level of theorisation across this literature.

#### 2.2 A costs/benefits perspective

Over the past decade there has been a growing body of empirical research on telework programs in the workplace. Much of this research has taken the form of evaluations of pilot telework programs and as such, has examined telework from a cost/benefits perspective. A summary of research examining the perceived costs and benefits, both to the individual and the organisation, is listed in Table 2-1 (Benefits) and Table 2-2 (Costs). The benefits of telework include increased productivity, increased flexibility, and reduced costs, for example in office space. The costs associated with telework include problems with defining output and quality standards for the work produced by teleworkers, and isolation of teleworkers. These studies suggest that the perceived benefits of telework often outweigh the perceived costs. However, as noted in the previous chapter, the take up of telework has been quite slow (Pagonis, 1995; Reinsch, 1995). This highlights the fact that organisational change does not occur inevitably from the introduction of new technology, nor because it makes sense economically.

Table 2-1 Summary of empirical research on benefits of telework

Benefits of telework	Reference
recruitment & retention of staff	Weijers et al. (1992); Zeytinoglu (1994); Skyrme (1994)
increased productivity (including less sick leave)	Ramsower (1985); Bailyn (1988); DIR (1996); DuBrin (1991); RTA (1996); Weijers et al. (1992); Zeytinoglu (1994); Skyrme (1994); British Telecommunications (1994); Tamrat et al. (1997)
increased satisfaction*	Bailyn (1988); DIR (1996); RTA (1996); Tamrat et al. (1997); *DuBrin (1991) found no difference in satisfaction
higher motivation	Weijers et al. (1992); Osborne (1993); DIR (1996)
reduced travel time	Weijers et al. (1992); British Telecommunications (1994); DIR (1996); RTA (1996)
reduced stress	British Telecommunications (1994); DIR (1996); RTA (1996)



Benefits of telework	Reference
increased flexibility	DIR (1996); RTA (1996); Weijers et al. (1992); British Telecommunications (1994); Skyrme (1994); Osborne (1993)
better organisational skills	RTA (1996)
increased self esteem	RTA (1996)
increased customer service	Weijers et al. (1992); Zeytinoglu (1994); British Telecommunications (1994)
greater autonomy	Weijers et al. (1992); Tamrat et al. (1997)
more family time, improved home life	Weijers et al. (1992); British Telecommunications (1994); RTA (1996)
reduced costs (eg office space, travel expenses)	Weijers et al. (1992); British Telecommunications (1994); Skyrme (1994); Zeytinoglu (1994); RTA (1996); DIR (1996)
increased staff loyalty, commitment	Huff, Sproull & Kiesler (cited in Sproull & Kiesler, 1991); Zeytinoglu (1994)

Table 2-2 Summary of empirical research on costs of telework

Costs of telework	Reference
problems with defining output & quality standards	Judkins (1988)
reduced feedback, reduced access to supervisors	RTA (1996); DIR (1996)
training costs	Weijers et al. (1992)
reduced communication (particularly informal communication)	Ramsower (1985); Hamilton (1987); DIR (1996); Weijers et al. (1992); Davenport (1995)
reduced career opportunities	DIR (1996); Weijers et al. (1992); Tamrat et al. (1997)
technology problems (& increased time to repair equipment)	DIR (1996); British Telecommunications (1994)
higher expectations regarding work output	DIR (1996)
reduced supervisor support, reduced quality of supervision	British Telecommunications (1994); Tamrat et al. (1997)
isolation	Weijers et al. (1992); British Telecommunications (1994); Tamrat et al. (1997)
extra equipment	Weijers et al. (1992)
lack of involvement with company	Weijers et al. (1992); Tamrat et al. (1997)
increased monitoring	Ramsower (1985)
problems with office based staff	Judkins (1988)

### 2.2.1 Summary of cost/benefits perspective

The literature that examines telework from a cost/benefits perspective identifies some of the important issues associated with telework, both at the organisational and individual level. This includes issues around control, isolation of teleworkers, and individual career progression. However, this literature provides little theoretical explanation in regard to these issues. A review of literature which theorises telework from an organisational behaviour perspective is included below. This literature focuses on the management of telework and teleworkers.

## 2.3 Managing telework

The literature reviewed in this section focuses on the management of telework. The importance of the teleworker - manager relationship emerges as a key theme in this literature (Bailyn, 1988; Baruch, 2001; Brewer & Hensher, 1998; Daniels, Lamond, & Standen, 2000; Harrington & Ruppel, 1999; Osborne, 1993; Olson & Primps, 1984; Reinsch, 1995; Tamrat et al., 1997; Zeytinoglu, 1994). The managing telework literature suggests telework has the potential to *change the way work is organised*, and this has implications for the work relationship between the teleworker and their manager (eg Bailyn, 1988; Osborne, 1993; Reinsch, 1995). A diagrammatic review of the literature on managing telework is provided in Figure 2-1. The categories of performance, control, authority, autonomy, commitment, support and trust have been used to examine the way work can be organised in telework settings.

### 2.3.1 Performance and Control

A study by van Der Wielen et al. (1994) examined the values and norms associated with management and control in a large multinational energy company in the Netherlands. The purpose of the study was to investigate if the organisation was ready for the introduction of telework. The basic premise guiding the study was that management methods and control mechanisms based on norms of co-presence would be unsuitable for the ongoing maintenance of telework in the organisation. A survey investigating the norms and values of current work practices was completed by 146 employees from high, medium and low salary categories in the organisation. It was found that the types of norms and values in use clustered around three areas associated with the work relationship: collaboration and co-presence; assessment of performance; and supervision and control. The researchers found that control and coordination of work processes was not accomplished using the rigid spatial and temporal boundaries associated with traditional control mechanisms. Rather, norms were in place that led the researchers to conclude that most bureaucratic forms of control had been abandoned by the organisation.

The results from this study suggest that implicit and explicit norms develop in work relationships in relation to performance and control and that these norms are related to the way work is organised, particularly in regard to the level of collaboration and co-presence that is required. These norms are based on traditional assumptions about time and space in organisations (see Table 2-3).

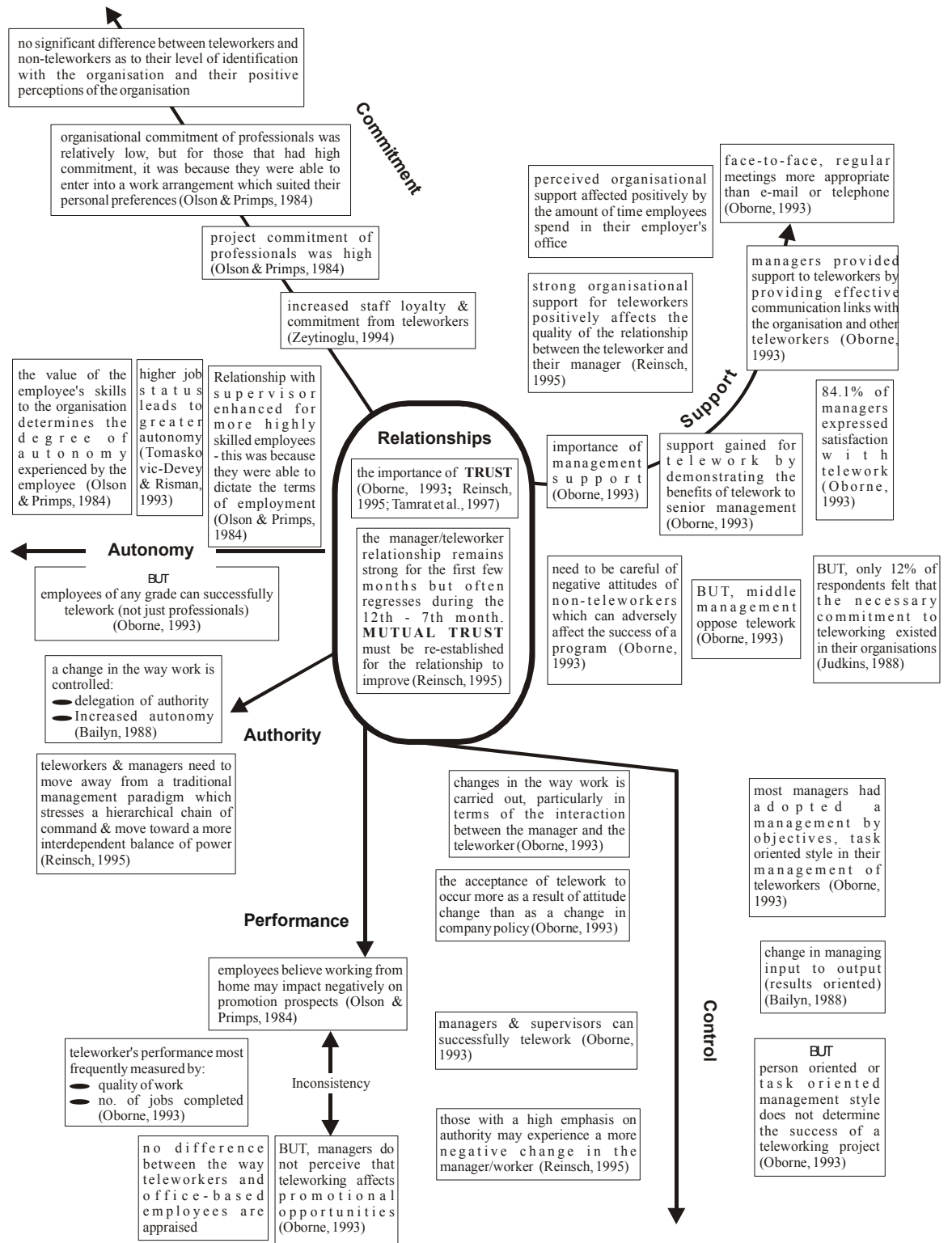


Figure 2-1 Key concepts from the managing telework literature\*

\* Source: Harman and Bordow (1998, p. 306)

Table 2-3 Norms based on traditional assumptions about time and space in organisations\*

<b>Collaboration and co-presence norms</b>
Perceived need of employee to cooperate and meet regularly in order to acquire the information needed to perform the tasks
Dependent on co-presence for cooperation
The need to reach informal consensus before decisions are formalised
Coordination of work requires a certain degree of mutual adjustment and ad-hoc informal consultation is considered important to gather the necessary information eg face-to-face consultation is used to coordinate work, obtain information and explore new ideas
Undefined task structure – need to keep checking with their manager on what they have to do
Prefer working at central office
<b>Performance norms</b>
The assessment of performance in relation to physical presence/absence in time (working hours) and place (head office)
Physical presence indicates commitment and reward eg influence of visible results on perceived involvement and appraisal
Need to demonstrate performance eg call management's attention to results, emphasis on impression management
Presence influences promotion
Autonomy related to independence (& authority?)
<b>Control norms</b>
Control and feedback process eg management need to inspect work and discipline subordinates for unsatisfactory performance
Low trust environment
Strict division between home and work
Absence of performance criteria

\* developed from van Der Wielen et al. (1994)

The norms listed in this table provide a useful starting point for thinking about work relationships in telework settings. The clustering of norms around performance and control issues suggests that performance and control will be useful concepts for exploring the development of work relationships in telework settings. The conceptualisation of performance and control in telework settings is provided in the following chapter.

### 2.3.2 Authority and Autonomy

Autonomy emerges as a key theme in the managing telework literature (Daniels et al., 2000). Much of this literature attempts to answer the question 'Does telework increase or decrease the teleworker's autonomy?' For example, studies of telework by Weijers et al. (1992) and Tamrat et al. (1997) refer to the greater autonomy perceived by

teleworkers. Other authors have found that autonomy does not necessarily increase with the introduction of telework (eg Olson & Primps, 1984).

Olson and Primps (1984) conducted research in 20 American organisations with telework pilot programs or informal work at home arrangements in place. Unstructured interviews were conducted with employees who worked at home on a regular basis as well as interviews with management. They found that policies concerning attendance and absenteeism, tardiness, and personal time off were redefined for clerical work-at-home employees in a way that decreased their autonomy. In contrast, highly skilled professionals, who were accustomed to a high degree of autonomy in their work, had that autonomy reinforced by working at home. It is interesting to note that in this study the majority of professionals who were teleworking believed that their relationship with their supervisor was enhanced. They believed this was possible because they were in a position to dictate the terms of their employment because their skills were in demand. The critical variable in relation to autonomy was the extent the organisation viewed the employee as an irreplaceable resource (Olson & Primps, 1984).

Authority is defined by Kahn (1994, p. 1) as ‘the given right to perform roles; such rights are legitimated by consensual decisions codified in constitutions, contracts, charters, rulings, and other accepted institutional sanctions’. Traditionally, authority has been invested in management to perform in a supervisory capacity to ensure the completion of work tasks (Zuboff, 1988). Some researchers argue that traditional hierarchical authority is no longer relevant in telework environments and needs to be redefined (eg Mirchandani, 1999; Perin, 1991; Tippin, 1994).

For example, Tippin (1994) argues that authority needs to be redefined in telework settings. In a study of control processes in telework settings, Tippin found that teleworkers themselves contribute to the system of control by using self-control mechanisms (1994). This use of self-control mechanisms by teleworkers led Tippin to question the need for management to perform in a supervisory capacity in telework settings. Tippin (1994, p 22) concludes from his research that: ‘The need for a supervisory role to oversee increasingly independent and self-directed employees working in separate offices is less clearly defined as a functional property of organisations.’ In other words, the function of supervision is redundant in telework settings.

In summary, this literature suggests that telework can be organised so that it either reinforces traditional constructions of autonomy and authority in the workplace (eg Olson & Primps, 1984), or so that alternative constructions can be negotiated which emphasise high autonomy and shift authority from the manager to the teleworker (eg Tippin, 1994). As little is known about the way autonomy and authority are constructed by teleworkers and managers, or the way they are negotiated in the telework setting, further research is recommended to explore these concepts.

### 2.3.3 Trust

One aspect of the work relationship in telework settings that is receiving growing attention in the literature is the issue of trust (eg Brigham & Corbett, 1996; Daniels et al., 2000; Davidow & Malone, 1992; Handy, 1995b; Harrington & Ruppel, 1999; Jackson & van der Wielen, 1998; Mirchandani, 1999; Nandhakumar, 1999; Tolbert & Simons, 1997). Some scholars consider trust to be the key ingredient of successful telework arrangements. For example, Handy (1995b, p. 44) argues that:

*If we are to enjoy the efficiencies and other benefits of the virtual organization, we will have to rediscover how to run organizations based more on trust than on control. Virtuality requires trust to make it work: Technology on its own is not enough.*

Handy's proposition has received empirical support from a recent study conducted by Harrington and Ruppel (1999). These researchers surveyed Information Systems managers from a cross section of US organisations and found that the adoption and diffusion of telecommuting was related to managers' trust in their employees. Managers were more likely to shift to a telecommuting arrangement when they trusted their employees.

Research by Nandhakumar (1999) indicates the importance of face-to-face communications in establishing trust in telecommuting work relationships. In a study of a large multinational organisation using a technology system for virtual teams called VTPC<sup>5</sup>, Nandhakumar found that virtual team members needed to establish working

---

<sup>5</sup> This technology included the use of a high powered desktop computer with videoconferencing and scanning facilities, multimedia email and groupware applications.

relationships using face-to-face interactions before commencing virtual teamworking. Traditional face-to-face interactions enabled virtual team members to share feelings and emotions whereas it was a ‘struggle’ to achieve that using the VTPC. This led Nandhakumar to conclude that VTPC was inadequate for maintaining and reproducing trust relationships and that personalised trust relationships established through face-to-face interactions are essential for continuous virtual teamworking. A number of other researchers also emphasise the importance of face-to-face communication in terms of establishing trust in the telework relationship (eg Abel, 1990; Nohria & Eccles, 1992; Schwarz, Nardi, & Whittaker, 1999).

This raises a paradox for telework as it is argued that a high trust paradigm is needed to sustain telework over the long term (eg Harrington & Ruppel, 1999; Perin, 1991; Reinsch, 1995) yet, trust is developed through the ongoing face-to-face interaction between managers and employees (eg Abel, 1990; Gabarro, 1990; Nandhakumar, 1999; Schwarz et al., 1999). These findings suggest that further research is required to investigate how trust is established and maintained in manager – employee work relationships in telework settings.

#### **2.3.4 *Commitment***

Much of the organisational literature on commitment focuses on commitment of the employee to the organisation. The underlying assumption in this literature is that high commitment leads to greater productivity (Legge, 1995). The telework literature on commitment has a similar focus and examines questions such as ‘how does telework impact on commitment?’ (of the person teleworking) and ‘how can this be managed?’ For example, Depickere (1998) investigated the commitment and control strategies used in a large multinational company in the computing industry with teleworking in place. She found that one of the most important reasons that professionals were committed to the organisation was the high level of autonomy they perceived in their jobs as a result of teleworking. Other perceived benefits of teleworking, such as a reduction in travel time and prestige associated with access to laptops and other equipment, also increased commitment. In terms of the management of commitment, she found that most teleworkers had worked with the company for several years and had built up a strong commitment to it before commencing telework. While commitment was high among teleworkers in the organisation, at the time the study was undertaken, managers believed

that commitment could become an issue over the long term, particularly if new employees commenced teleworking at the outset of joining the organisation. These findings suggest that the managers in the study associated the development of organisational commitment with socialisation processes that take place in organisations, and assume that this occurs in face-to-face settings.

A much earlier study by Olson and Primps (1984) found that organisational commitment of teleworking professionals was relatively low, however, their commitment to their project, product or work group was high (the details of this study have been described previously in section 2.3.2). Olson and Primps' study incorporates the distinction between levels of commitment in an organisation. That is, an organisational member may be committed to their workgroup but do not feel committed to the overall organisation. It is interesting to note however, that for those teleworkers that did have high commitment to the organization, it was because the organisation had provided the opportunity to create work arrangements to suit their personal preferences. Several employees joined a company because they knew that they would be able to work from home and many said that if the privilege was removed that they might seek employment elsewhere (Olson & Primps, 1984). Therefore, the reasons for feeling committed are similar to those found in the later study by Depickere (1998).

The research reviewed in this section suggests that telework can increase the commitment, at various levels in the organisation, of the teleworker. For example, the commitment of the teleworker to the organisation may be enhanced by telework, or commitment to the workgroup, or commitment to the project. There is no discussion in this literature of the commitment of the teleworker to the actual telework arrangement, and further research is suggested which explores this issue. An alternative conceptualisation of commitment which links it with the legitimization of telework is provided in the following chapter.

### *2.3.5 Support*

Various telework studies suggest that support plays an important part in the success of telework programs. For example, Reinsch (1995) found that strong organisational support for teleworkers positively affected the quality of the relationship between the teleworker and their manager. In Reinsch's study, organisational support was demonstrated by the



provision of technical support such as connections and hardware. Although Wellman et al. (1996) have identified that workers separated by physical distance require social as well as technical support, Reinsch's study suggests that these may be interrelated. In other words, the provision of equipment and technical support may act as a signal that telework is supported by the organisation, and therefore considered legitimate. Mirchandani (1999) discusses the value of support in contributing to the legitimisation of telework. Mirchandani suggests that for telework to become legitimate within organisations there needs to be a public recognition of the existence and value of this type of work arrangement. Strategies that she recommends include the standardisation of protection for the teleworker in formal contracts, and training on telework for support staff and HR personnel.

The PATRA study (Psychological Aspects of Teleworking in Rural Areas) conducted in the United Kingdom in the early 1990's discusses the issue of support and suggests that it plays a central role in teleworking success. The PATRA project examined the social and psychological aspects of teleworking predominantly from the viewpoint of teleworkers, supervisors, and clients. Information was gathered by surveying teleworkers from a variety of telework settings and by conducting in-depth workshop discussions with teleworker supervisors and organisational decision makers.

Managers were asked to describe how they secured high-level support for teleworking and issues involving teleworkers. This question was interpreted either: i) in terms of support for teleworking as an alternative method of work within their organisation, or as ii) support to teleworkers themselves. In regard to gaining support for teleworking as an optional way of working, managers mentioned the importance of demonstrating the benefits of telework to senior management. This was achieved through use of pilot studies or by presenting successful cases of telework used in other organisations. However, one manager remarked that it was often difficult to gain support for telework "as many senior managers cannot seem to make the paradigm shift of managing people 'out of shouting range' and trusting people to do what is right" (Osborne, 1993, p. 23). This links with the importance of changing traditional management attitudes in terms of implementing and sustaining telework arrangements.

In regard to the provision of support to teleworkers, managers emphasised the need for effective communication links with the organisation and with other teleworkers to keep them informed on relevant issues. These lines of communication were maintained either through regular face-to-face meetings or by using information technology, such as video links between teleworkers and their main office.

It is interesting to note that in much earlier organisational research, Fox (1974) identified support as an important variable in high trust, manager – employee work relationships. Fox described the features of high trust relations between managers and employees as: *mutual support*, mutual confidence, open communications, concern for each other's interests, expectations of good faith, and consciousness of shared interests and values. This suggests a relationship between trust and support in co-located work settings that needs to be investigated in the telework setting.

This review of the telework literature on support indicates that little is known about the way support is related to the development of work relationships in telework settings. However, the relationship between mutual support and the development of high trust relations, which has been identified in the organisational literature, suggests that support may be a useful concept for exploring the development of work relationships in telework settings.

### ***2.3.6 The work relationship in the telework setting***

While there is a range of normative literature discussing the way telework should be organised and managed (eg Gordon, ; Kugelmass, 1995; Moffatt, 1998), there are few empirical studies examining actual work relationships in telework settings. One of the few studies of teleworker – manager work relationships in telework settings was conducted by Reinsch (1995). This study examined the effects of telecommuting on manager - employee relationships. Reinsch collected information from telecommuters and their immediate supervisors using a questionnaire and follow-up phone interview. A number of different organisations were involved in the study including American Express and Marriott International. Reinsch found that the quality of the telecommuter – manager work relationship was significantly correlated with telecommuting success. Quality work relationships were defined a priori as those where the manager exhibited trust, openness to feedback and loyalty. Reinsch found that the relationship often regressed during the 7th

to 12th month of a telecommuting program and that mutual trust needed to be re-established for the relationship to improve. A key recommendation from this study was that organisations implementing telecommuting programs devote resources to nurturing the quality of relationships between telecommuters and their managers. It was recommended that training be conducted for teleworkers and their managers. However, little detail was provided in terms of what this training should entail.

Reinsch's study is particularly relevant to the current research as it highlights aspects of the teleworker – manager relationship that require further investigation. The study suggests that there are stages in the development of the distance work relationship. Reinsch found that the relationship quality was high for the first six months of telecommuting, deteriorated during the next six months, and then recovered during the second year. However, while the results suggest a relationship between the quality of the work relationship and the success of the telework program, it provides little in-depth information about the nature of work relationships conducted at a distance. Reinsch's study provides little detail on why the relationship regresses in the telework setting, and the processes involved in re-establishing trust in the relationship.

The above research is supported by Baba (1999) who claims that the assumption that new information technology will allow an organisation to transcend geographic and temporal barriers ignores the need for intangible and difficult to manage changes that occur with interpersonal relationships. One reason offered for the possible changes is the work relationship is offered by Hinds and Bailey (2000). They say that managers and teleworkers may develop different ideas of the task, work practices, work goals, and the problems as a result of their differing experiences due to their different work settings. This could lead to the deterioration of the work relationship and reduced shared understanding. Similarly, Weisenfeld et al. (1999) suggest that the organisational cues that help create a shared reality among employees such as dress codes, shared language, and shared organisational routines, may not be present in a telework setting.

In summary, the research reviewed in this section suggests that the manager-subordinate work relationship has the potential to change in the telework setting. However, there is little theorising on how this happens, and why.

## 2.4 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed literature that focuses on telework at the level of the workplace. The cost/benefits research on telework has come out of evaluations of telework projects, usually in specific organisations. This literature draws attention to issues associated with telework, at the individual and organisational level, but provides little theorisation of telework or work relationships in telework settings. The managing telework literature begins to explore some of the issues raised in the cost/benefit evaluation studies in more detail. This literature draws attention to the importance of the teleworker – manager work relationship. The managing telework literature points to particular aspects of the teleworker – manager work relationship requiring further exploration. The themes of performance, control, authority, autonomy, commitment, support and trust come out of this literature. Studies have been conducted over the past two decades that have examined the impact of telework on these various aspects of the work relationship. However, most of these studies have considered the above themes discretely rather than looking at the actual work relationship as the object of study. As little research has been undertaken in this field, I argue that further exploratory research is required to better understand the development of work relationships in telework settings. The development of work relationships in telework settings needs to be theorised so that senior managers, managers and teleworkers are able to develop strategies for creating sustainable work relationships in telework settings. Therefore, the problem being explored in the current research is: ‘How do teleworker - manager relationships develop in telework settings?’ A model for exploring this question is provided in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER 3 – A MODEL FOR EXPLORING WORK RELATIONSHIPS IN TELEWORK SETTINGS

### 3 The Model

#### 3.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 overviewed the managing telework literature and identified the research problem: ‘How do teleworker - manager relationships develop in telework settings?’ A model for exploring this question is provided in this chapter. The model draws on organisational literature from two areas. The first area is literature that explores the underlying assumptions associated with the traditional organisation of work. The second area is literature that explores the development of work relationships. This literature will be discussed, and then the framework for exploring teleworker – manager work relationships will be described.

#### 3.2 Underlying assumptions guiding the traditional organisation of work

When we think about workplaces we tend to think about paid work as taking place in a ‘separate sphere’ to the home (Perin, 1998, p. 41). Phizaclea and Wolkowitz (1995) refer to this as the ‘ideological break’ that occurred with the onset of the Industrial Revolution in terms of the way the home and work are constructed. This industrial model of work organisation includes concepts such as: the standardisation of machines, products and processes; the concentration of work in one location; the synchronisation of processes; and the centralisation of planning and decision making (Toffler, 1980).

Some authors claim that historically, the industrial model of work organisation made good sense. For example, Kawakami (cited in Huws et al., 1990) notes that central urban locations provided a number of advantages over rural, decentralised locations including: economies of scale in the use of equipment, close supervision of subordinates, ease of communication with co-workers and access to information necessary for the work process, for example, central files and reference materials.

Many of these ideas still inform our underlying assumptions of the ‘best’ way to organise work (eg Keleher & Filson, 1995; Perin, 1991). For example, Becker (1986) points out that much of the interdependence that we value and use to justify centralised working facilities stems from our need for social contact, from the assumption that employees will

not really work if they are not physically visible to their supervisor and colleagues, and from the belief that different departments, divisions, groups, and individuals within an organisation are highly interdependent, and therefore need to be physically proximate.

Many analysts of telework believe that traditional management attitudes provide the biggest barrier to the adoption and diffusion of telework in organisations (Huws et al., 1990; Keleher & Filson, 1995; Lynch & Skelton, 1995; Osborne, 1993; Olson, 1983; Pagonis, 1995; Perin, 1991; Reinsch, 1995). This claim is reinforced by Jackson and van der Wielen (1998, p. 11) who believe that:

*managers used to having all functions beneath the same ‘roof’, with employees operating under the watchful gaze of supervisors, may lack the sort of values, attitudes (particularly that of trust) and behaviour needed for more virtual forms of organisation to operate.*

Perin draws attention to many of the underlying assumptions that guide the contemporary organisation of work in an important study of telework which she conducted in the early 1990's. Perin (1991) provides an informative analysis of issues relating to the adoption and maintenance of work relationships in telework settings. She frames her discussion around two contrasting organisational discourses, panopticon discourse and performance discourse. Perin uses the term discourse in a Foucauldian sense where discourse can be understood as the combined social and language practices in use in the organisation that contribute to the way work is understood and organised. Perin says that panopticon discourse can be traced back to Jeremy Bentham's 18th century notion of the Panopticon, a building designed to make inmates or employees feel that they were being observed continuously, thus controlling their behaviour. Perin says that panopticon discourse places an emphasis on the norm of continuous visibility in the workplace whereas performance discourse focuses on organisational outcomes, rather than the means to achieving these outcomes.

Perin argues that the taken for granted assumptions that we make about places and times of work continue to sustain panopticon discourse in organisations. For example the cultural divide that exists between home and work influences the way both employees and managers think about telework. Home represents 'family, leisure, idling, and privacy'

(Perin, 1991, p. 248) and these ideas oppose the premises underlying ‘work’. This results in barriers to adopting telework arrangements from both managers and employees. For example, employees do not want work to intrude on their home lives because they consider home-life private, and managers distrust employees’ diligence if working from home because home is associated with leisure.

Another assumption highlighted by Perin (1991) is that the social and physical structures of the office facilitate work processes. This assumption is based on the traditional industrial model of organising work and disregards the potential of advanced information and communication technology. The industrial model assumes that workers need to be physically present in order to access and pass on information. It also assumes that social structures, such as traditional authority relations based on hierarchy, facilitate work processes.

A third assumption is that of appearances. Managers like to see employees being active. For example, while sitting at their desk an employee might be using a keyboard, telephone, or pencil and paper, and give the appearance of being productive. However, if an employee was sitting at their desk and thinking about their work, even though thinking might be an important aspect of the job, this would not appear to be very productive. In the same respect, an employee who is not physically present in the office is unable to provide the visual appearance of productivity. It is interesting to note that in contrast to this assumption many teleworkers report that they are more productive when teleworking because they have fewer interruptions (DIR, 1996; RTA, 1996; Tamrat et al., 1997). Perin (1991) believes that managers equate productivity with presence, punctuality and tangible results.

Office presence is also important from the employee’s perspective. Many studies of telework mention employee concerns about the impact of teleworking on their career development (van Der Wielen et al., 1994; DIR, 1996; Hamilton, 1987; Mirchandani, 1999; Olson & Primps, 1984; RTA, 1997; Tamrat et al., 1997; Weijers et al., 1992). Perin (1991) argues that this is because professionals believe performance and career evaluation systems are based as much on the meanings of office presence as on work products. Many professionals view overtime as a career investment rather than exploitation (Perin, 1991). These beliefs come to the surface when employees speak of being ‘privileged’ to not have

to be in the office all the time, even when it is necessary for them to get their work done. This is particularly relevant to sales, service staff and consultants who need to be out with their customers. Perin found that salaried professional absence is regarded negatively rather than being positively associated with increased customer contact (Perin, 1991).

Perin argues that the above examples of panopticon discourse prevent telework from becoming a legitimate work practice. In contrast, performance discourse is an alternative which allows employers, employees and theorists to consider work innovations such as telework ‘as inherent in the interdependencies of the employer-employee relationship itself’ rather than as the “‘privileges”, “benefits”, and “concessions” of a unilateral relationship’ (Perin, 1991, p. 261). In other words, in performance discourse, telework is viewed as ‘normal’. It is not viewed as a reward, offered only to valued employees, but as a solution available to all employees who require greater flexibility in the time and place that they carry out their work in order to perform more productively.

*Performance discourse modernizes the logics of authority and ownership by shifting to the logics of work: Time, place, pace, rhythm, and delegation of responsibility are answerable more to the substantive logics of work processes than to formal command and control. (Perin, 1991, p. 259)*

In performance discourse telework is viewed as a work practice that contributes to increased organisational performance and therefore becomes legitimate.

Perin (1991) claims that panopticon discourse, where an emphasis is placed on visibility, still informs the way authority and autonomy are understood in the workplace. For example, the ‘inspectional and disciplinary rights’ of management are taken for granted and telework, since it makes this type of interaction difficult, is viewed as challenging traditional managerial authority (Perin, 1991, p. 257). Autonomy is also traditionally associated with authority, and is only considered legitimate for more senior organisational members. Perin argues that employers “equate trust and co-presence” and view “self-management as the repudiation of their inspectional and disciplinary rights” (1991, p. 261). Perin’s theorisation suggests that teleworkers and their managers will need to renegotiate authority and autonomy in telework settings as existing constructions are



unlikely to sustain telework over the long term. This important theme is incorporated into the framework for exploring work relationships in telework settings.

### 3.3 The development of work relationships in co-located settings

The other area of literature guiding the development of the model is the organisational literature on work relationships. Although the importance of work relationships is generally recognised in management theory, there is little literature that specifically examines the development and maintenance of superior – subordinate work relationships over time (Burns & Otte, 1999; Gabarro, 1990; Lee & Jablin, 1995). Gabarro's analysis of the development of manager – employee work relationships (1978; 1990; 1991) is one of the few studies in this field. In an exploratory field study conducted in the 1970's, Gabarro followed the development of work relationships between newly appointed presidents and their subordinates in four American companies over a three year timeframe. Gabarro found that these work relationships developed over a period of time in several sequential stages. The newly formed work relationships began with a period of initial impression making<sup>6</sup> and culminated in a stage in which both parties had worked out a relatively stable set of mutual expectations in regard to performance, roles, trust, and influence. The four processes involved in relationship development were expectation formation, attribution, assessment and evaluation (Gabarro, 1990).

Gabarro then analysed the development of work relationships from three perspectives:

- the development of expectations
- the development of trust
- the development of influence

However, he points out that these perspectives are interrelated and it may be artificial to try and separate them. Influence is linked to credibility, which is linked to trust. For example, the more credible one person becomes to another, the more influence they will have in those areas in which they are trusted. The development of trust is a function of

---

<sup>6</sup> In a later article Gabarro (1990) discusses the importance of roles and role expectations at the beginning of the new work relationship. Work relationships often begin with an institutionalised role relationship, that is, a traditional hierarchical role relationship, before the actual work relationship develops. People's reactions to each other and the attributions they make about each other are influenced by role expectations. These role definitions will impact on the levels of openness, trust and self disclosure in a work relationship (pp 95, 96).

how clearly mutual expectations are worked through and how each party meets the others expectations (Gabarro, 1978).

He also found that one of the most important concerns when negotiating expectations was performance. Performance related issues included establishing business goals, how goals should be achieved, priorities, and standards of performance. Expectations were communicated and worked out in different ways. At times they were communicated formally at meetings, but more often they were worked out in the process of day-to-day interactions such as ad-hoc meetings on specific problems. Expectations were also communicated symbolically, for example, the number of hours worked by the boss (Gabarro, 1978). In a later publication, Gabarro and Kotter (1991) provide more detail on the negotiation between the two parties on how they should actually work with each other. They emphasise the importance of processes such as interdependence, autonomy and individual influence, which are in turn affected by each person's assumptions about trust and power within the relationship.

Some relationships developed more quickly or with greater depth and Gabarro postulated that one reason for this was physical proximity. He also found that with continued interaction, attributions made by managers and subordinates about interpersonal variables such as trust and influence moved from general and impressionistic to differentiated and specific.

Gabarro's key findings can be summarised as follows:

1. *Work relationships develop over time and progress through a series of stages.*
2. *Physical proximity facilitates the development of work relationships.*
3. *Expectations are often communicated informally.*
4. *Trust is developed in the work relationship when the manager and the employee are able to meet each other's expectations, particularly in regard to performance.*

Gabarro's theorisation of work relationships provides three useful concepts for exploring work relationships in telework settings. These are: i) the notion of stages in the work relationship; ii) the negotiation of expectations, particularly in relation to performance;

and iii) the development of trust. These ideas have been incorporated into the framework below. The framework links the successful negotiation of expectations at each stage of the work relationship to the progression of the work relationship through each of the stages.

### 3.4 A framework for exploring telework relationships

The two areas of literature discussed above have been used to develop a model for exploring teleworker – manager relationships in telework settings (see Figure 3-1).

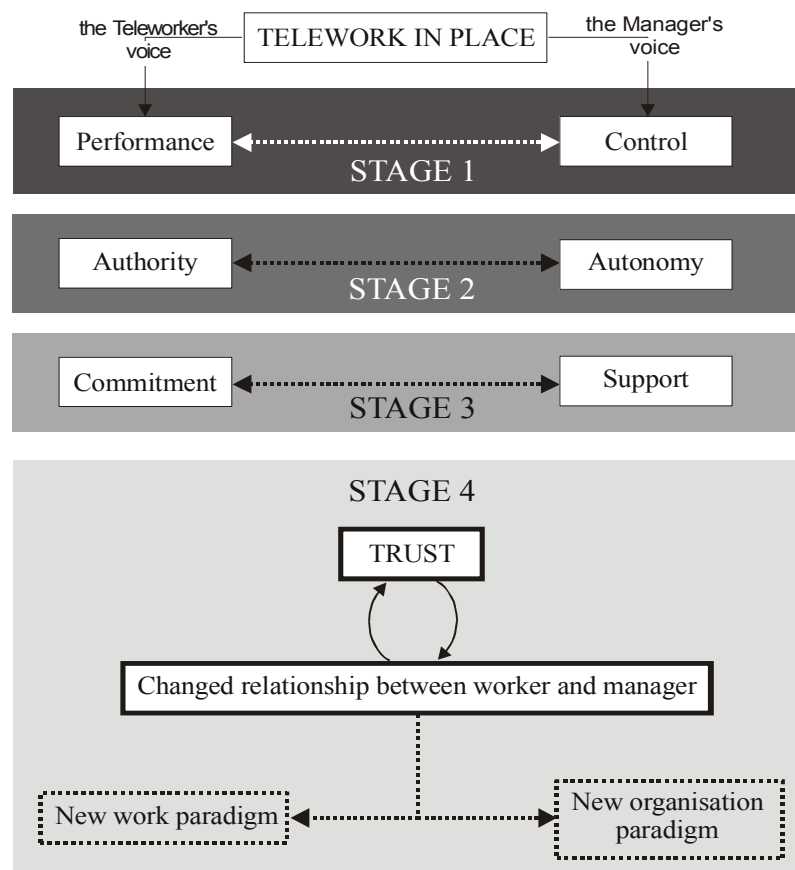


Figure 3-1 A framework for exploring teleworker manager work relationships

The framework above depicts the voice of the teleworker (left hand side) and the voice of the manager (right hand side) as metaphors in that each will be “speaking” to the other every step of the way through their work relationship development in the telework setting. Initially, *performance* and *control* measures are not explicitly spoken out as these are still bounded by their organisation’s existing requirements for all of its *in situ* workforce, including its teleworkers. Performance is implicitly heard in the voice of the teleworker, however, in wanting to prove that they are able to effectively produce to the their

organisation's standard but in a telework situation. Similarly, control is implicitly voiced by their manager as expression of a major function of management itself.

The next stage involves the process of the teleworker and their manager paying attention to the questions of *authority* and *autonomy*. In the present study authority is understood as authority for the teleworker to perform their work at a distance. Teleworkers will be given authority to control the way they operate in the telework setting rather than relying on direct control mechanisms imposed by their manager. Autonomy is related to authority and is understood as the discretion the teleworker has in terms of scheduling and carrying out their work.

The next stage of the work relationship is concerned with *commitment* and *support*. The concern for the teleworker is that they are able to commit to the telework arrangement over the long term. The corresponding concern from the manager's perspective is that they can provide support to the teleworker.

The final stage of the framework focuses on relationship maintenance and highlights the importance of *trust*. The framework proposes that trust in a telework relationship will finally be gained as a function of the successful resolution of the questions from the process level (autonomy, authority, commitment and support) and the acceptance of the newly forged work relationship. New work and organisational paradigms will then be revealed as a result of the interaction between trust, the changed relationship and the effects of teleworking behaviours themselves.

### 3.5 Conclusion

A framework has been developed from the above literature to guide the study of teleworker – manager relationships in telework settings. The aim of the framework is to provide concepts for further study rather than to provide hypotheses for testing. As identified in the literature, key aspects of the work relationship requiring further investigation in a telework setting include: performance, control, authority, autonomy, commitment, support, and the development of trust. These concepts will be used to investigate the research problem: 'How do teleworker – manager work relationships develop in telework settings?'

## CHAPTER 4 – METHODOLOGY

### 4 Methodology

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter describes each stage of the research, and the issues and choices made at each of these stages. It begins with a brief description of an interpretive approach and a case study method and the reasons for choosing this methodology. The research design is then described, and an outline of the three stages of the research is provided. Stages 1 and 2 of the research provide the background for the in-depth case study interviews conducted in Stage 3. This section is followed by an overview of the procedures used in the case study analysis. The limitations of the research are then considered, and finally, an overall summary is drawn.

#### 4.2 The interpretive approach

Glesne (1999) provides a useful table that highlights the differences between interpretive and positivist research approaches (see Table 4-1). The features of an interpretive approach will be discussed below, as well as the underlying assumptions of the current study, using the table as a guide.

The most important difference between a positivist and interpretive approach is the underlying assumptions that guide both these approaches. An interpretive approach assumes that reality is socially constructed whereas a positivist approach assumes that social facts have an objective reality. In the present study, rather than trying to observe an objective reality, and predict and measure the causal relationships between variables in the teleworker – manager work relationship, the underlying assumption is that organisational ‘reality’ is constructed by people and this is revealed in what people do, say, feel and think. The focus in the present study is on the lived experience of teleworkers and their managers and how they attribute meaning to their circumstances. It aims to capture what is important to them, from their own perspective. This means that rather than using quantitative methods to establish general laws about managers and their subordinates, richer, qualitative accounts are being gathered which emphasise context. In the present study, *work relationships* between managers and their subordinates are being explored in a *telework context*. Perry and Coote (1994, p. 3) argue that an interpretive approach is more likely to ‘capture the complexity and dynamism of the context of

organisational settings’ than a positivist approach, which is characterised by deductive, nomothetic, theory testing methods.

Table 4-1 Comparison of interpretive and positivist approaches\*

	positivist mode	interpretive mode
assumptions	social facts have an objective reality	reality is socially constructed
	variables can be identified and relationships measured	variables are complex, interwoven & difficult to measure
research purposes	generalisability	contextualisation
	causal explanations	understanding
	prediction	interpretation
research approach	begins with hypotheses & theory	may result in hypotheses & theory
	uses formal instruments	researcher as instrument
	experimental	naturalistic
	deductive	inductive
	component analysis	searches for patterns
	seeks the norm	seeks pluralism, complexity
	reduces data to numerical indices	makes minor use of numerical indices
	uses abstract language in write-up	descriptive write-up
researcher role	detachment	personal involvement
	objective portrayal	empathic understanding

\* from Glesne (Glesne, 1999)

### 4.3 The case study method

As mentioned in the previous section, the focus of this research is on exploring and understanding the development of work relationships between managers and their subordinates in a telework context. In-depth, qualitative data is needed in order to better understand these types of work relationships. This is because relatively little known about work relationships in telework settings and the emphasis needs to be on developing concepts for studying these relationships. Therefore, a case study method has been chosen as case studies are recommended for in-depth investigations that aim to draw out the details from the viewpoint of the participants (eg Parkhe, 1993; Tellis, 1997; Yin, 1994).

#### 4.3.1 Inductive versus deductive approaches

While the case study is a research strategy that focuses on understanding the dynamics present within single settings, and fits within the interpretive paradigm (Eisenhardt,

1989), case study methods can range from inductive to deductive (Perry & Coote, 1994). For example, Yin (1994) has developed robust procedures for designing and analysing case studies and emphasises a more deductive approach, where propositions are developed and examined in the case study design and analysis.

Eisenhardt (1989) and Perry and Coote (1994) advocate a case study methodology which incorporates both deductive and inductive approaches. This combined approach acknowledges the value that theory contributes to the formulation of the research design, while at the same time recognising the benefits of keeping theory development grounded in the data. This approach is particularly relevant when the theoretical base is relatively underdeveloped (Perry & Coote, 1994), such as in the current research.

As the purpose of the study is to gain a better understanding of manager – employee work relationships in telework settings, and there is little known about this topic area, an exploratory rather than explanatory (hypothesis testing) approach needs to be used. Parkhe (1993), Eisenhardt (1989) and Miles and Huberman (1994) all recommend using an exploratory rather than explanatory approach when little is known about the phenomenon being studied.

The research method will follow many of the processes outlined by Eisenhardt (1989) for building theory from case study research (see Table 4-2).

Table 4-2 Process of Building Theory from Case Study Research\*

Step	Activity	Reason
Getting Started	Definition of research question	Focuses efforts
	Possibly a priori constructs	Provides better grounding of construct
Selecting Cases	Neither theory nor hypotheses	Retains theoretical flexibility
	Specified population	Constrains extraneous variation and sharpens external validity
	Theoretical, not random sampling	Focuses efforts on theoretically useful cases—ie those that replicate or extend theory by filling conceptual categories
Crafting instruments and Protocols	Multiple data collection methods	Strengthens grounding of theory by triangulation of evidence
	Qualitative and quantitative data combined	Synergistic view of evidence

---

	Multiple investigators	Fosters divergent perspectives and strengthens grounding
Entering the Field	Overlap data collection and analysis, including field notes	Speeds analyses and reveals helpful adjustments to data collection Allows investigators to take advantage of emergent themes and unique case features
	Flexible and opportunistic data collection methods	
Analyzing Data	Within-case analysis	Gains familiarity with data and preliminary theory generation
	Cross-case pattern search using divergent techniques	Forces investigators to look beyond initial impressions and see evidence thru multiple lenses
Shaping Hypotheses	Iterative tabulation of evidence for each construct	Sharpens construct definition validity, and measurability
	Replication, not sampling, logic across cases	Confirms, extends, and sharpens theory
	Search evidence for ‘why’ behind relationships	Builds internal validity
Enfolding Literature	Comparison with conflicting literature	Builds internal validity, raises theoretical level, and sharpens construct definitions
	Comparison with similar literature	Sharpens generalizability, improves construct definition, and raises theoretical level
Reaching Closure	Theoretical saturation when possible	Ends process when marginal improvement becomes small

---

\* from Eisenhardt (1989, p. 533)

Eisenhardt’s ‘roadmap’ for developing theory from case study research has been synthesised predominantly from three key works on qualitative methods: Miles and Huberman, 1984; Yin, 1981; and Glaser and Strauss, 1967 (1989, pp. 532-533). The emphasis in the present research is on theory building, so while it is important to identify the research question and possible constructs at the beginning of the study in order to provide focus for the study, it is also important to recognise that the constructs are only tentative and that: ‘No construct is guaranteed a place in the resultant theory, no matter how well it is measured’ (Eisenhardt, 1989, p. 536).

The framework developed in Chapter 3 provides the key concepts that will be explored in the study. Following Eisenhardt’s theory development approach (1989), these concepts



provide the starting point for the exploration of teleworker – manager relationships. The concepts of performance, control, authority, autonomy, commitment, support and trust will be used to explore the development of work relationships in telework settings.

#### 4.4 Research Design

The exploratory nature of the study resulted in the research being conducted in three distinct stages: (1) introduction to telework settings, (2) pilot interviews exploring the teleworker – manager relationship, and (3) in-depth case study interviews. The inductive insights gained from the introductory and pilot interviews were ‘coupled’ with the literature on telework to formulate the interview protocol used in the case study interviews. This more flexible approach, where the researcher enters the field without pre-determined hypotheses, is recommended by Eisenhardt (1989), and Perry and Coote (1994)

##### 4.4.1 Stage 1 – Introduction to the field

The first stage of the research involved gaining an introduction to telework and developing a pre-understanding of the phenomenon before developing a method for later systematic study (Gummesson, 1991). Preliminary interviews were conducted with teleworkers and employee relations managers from organisations, located in Australia, which have telework arrangements in place (see Table 4-3).

The organisations used in the preliminary stage of the research were identified by various sources including newspaper reports, telework conference programs, and referrals.

Table 4-3 Preliminary Interviews conducted at these organisations

Organisation	Industry	Size	Estimated no. of teleworkers (1997) <sup>x</sup>
American Express	Credit Card & Travel Arrangements	1,250 <sup>*</sup>	5
AMP	Insurance	12,153 <sup>*</sup>	10
Ampol	Lubricating Products	115	Unknown
Australian Securities Commission	Auxiliary Services to Business	1,500 <sup>†</sup>	12
BHP	Steel Products	Unknown	6
Ernst & Young	Corporate Advisory Services	2,167 <sup>†</sup>	20 (in Sydney)
Anonymous <sup>††</sup>	Market Research	16 <sup>†</sup>	2
Lend Lease	Property Development & Management	4,516 <sup>†</sup>	6
Anonymous <sup>††</sup>	Telecommunications	270 <sup>†</sup>	Unknown
Anonymous <sup>††</sup>	Energy	1,300 <sup>†</sup>	10
Telstra	Telecommunications	73,300 <sup>†</sup>	3 <sup>‡</sup>

Westpac	Finance	33,000 <sup>†</sup>	Unknown
Anonymous <sup>††</sup>	IT		
CBA	Finance		
Anonymous <sup>††</sup>	Pharmaceuticals		

Key:

\* Source: (*Who's who in business in Australia 1995, 1994*)

† Source: (*Kompass Australia 1998, 1997*)

‡ Telstra is also undertaking a telework trial which involves more teleworkers

<sup>x</sup> Source: HR/Employment Relations manager

<sup>††</sup> These companies preferred to remain unnamed

The purpose of the Stage 1 research was to:

1. Gain an overview of teleworking in Australia. For example, reasons for organisations introducing telework, who is able to telework and key issues for teleworkers (see Appendix A, on page 161, for a copy of the interview schedules used for HR/Employee Relations managers and Teleworkers)
2. Establish contact with teleworkers and their employers with the intent of gaining future access for a more detailed investigation.

A review of the literature on telework was undertaken during the completion of the Stage 1 research and this led to a focus in Stages 2 and 3 on the teleworker – manager relationship.

#### 4.4.2 Stage 2 – Introductory interviews with teleworker – manager sets

The second stage of the research involved gaining an understanding of telework relationships from the perspective of both managers and teleworkers. Introductory interviews were conducted with 11 teleworker – manager sets from various organisations (see Table 4-4). These interviews were obtained by either contacting organisations that were known to be conducting telework programs and organising to talk with teleworkers and their managers, or speaking directly with people that I found out were teleworking, from a variety of sources. Most of the organisations that I spoke with in Stage 1 of the research did not want to participate in this stage so most of the organisations, and the teleworker – manager sets, were newly recruited to the research.

Teleworkers and their managers were interviewed individually (see Appendix B, on page 164, for the interview schedule used at these interviews). Transcripts were made of these

interviews but only the transcripts of teleworker – manager sets that participated in Stage 3 of the research were used in the final analysis of the data. The Stage 2 research enabled an initial exploration of issues impacting on teleworker – manager relationships in telework settings, from the perspective of both teleworkers and their managers.

Table 4-4 Introductory Interviews with teleworker - manager sets

			Interview date
Organisation 1	Set 1	teleworker	7/7/98
		manager	7/7/98
	Set 2	teleworker	29/7/98
		manager	7/7/98
	Set 3	teleworker	7/7/98
		manager	7/7/98
	Set 4	teleworker	26/8/98
		manager	4/8/98
	Set 5	teleworker	11/8/98
		manager	4/8/98
	Set 6	teleworker	7/7/98
		manager	4/8/98
	Set 7	teleworker	11/8/98
		manager	11/8/98
Organisation 2	Set 8	teleworker	23/10/98
		manager	27/10/98
Organisation 3	Set 9	teleworker	20/8/98
		manager	16/3/99
Organisation 4	Set 10	teleworker	27/7/98
		manager	14/8/98
Organisation 5	Set 11	teleworker	8/5/00
		manager	7/6/00
Organisation 6	Set 12	teleworker	17/4/01
		manager	17/4/01

#### 4.4.3 Stage 3 – In-depth case study interviews

The third stage of the research involved the in-depth interviewing of teleworker – manager sets over a period of time. Interviews were conducted individually, via email, and in group settings, where both the teleworker and their manager were present (see Table 4-5). Yin (1994) recommends using multiple sources of evidence in order to enhance construct validity in the research study. Therefore, both teleworkers and their managers were provided with the opportunity to offer their perspectives on the work relationship, and to express their perception of particular events and actions over a period

of time. The details of how this was done are provided below in section 4.4.3.2 Stage 3 - research procedure.

The level of access that was required to complete this part of the study meant that for a variety of reasons many of the teleworker – manager sets interviewed in the previous stage of the research were unable to be involved.<sup>7</sup> Six teleworker – manager sets were involved in Stage 3 of the research and were interviewed at least three times, usually over a 12 month timeframe.

Table 4-5 Timetable of interviews

<b>Teleworker – manager set</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>E-mail interviews (completed individually)</b>	<b>Individual interview</b>	<b>Group interview</b>
Rebecca (teleworker) – Greg (manager)	Research Inc.*	1/8/99 16/8/99 6/9/99 20/12/99	(Rebecca) 27/7/98	5/11/99 3/4/00
Tania (teleworker) – Greg (manager)	Research Inc.*	1/8/99 16/8/99 6/9/99 20/12/99	(Tania) 13/3/98 24/7/98	5/11/99 3/4/00
Peter (teleworker) – Cath (manager)	Energy organisation ‘NRG’*	1/8/99 16/8/99 6/9/99 20/12/99	7/7/98 29/7/98	12/10/99 15/3/00
Colin (teleworker) – John (manager)	Telecommunications organisation ‘NetCom’*			6/3/00 15/5/00 24/7/00
Jennifer (teleworker) – Anne CJ (manager)	Financial Services organisation ‘InfoCheck’*			27/4/01 25/5/01 22/6/01
Leanne (teleworker) – Anne CJ (manager)	Financial Services organisation ‘InfoCheck’*			27/4/01 25/5/01 22/6/01

\* This is a pseudonym given to the organisation

<sup>7</sup> Some organisations did not want this type of information to be made public, other organisations were involved in restructuring which meant that the teleworker – manager set would not be able to participate for the duration of the study, others felt that they could not commit the time.

### 4.4.3.1 Selection of cases

#### 4.4.3.1.1 Bounding the territory

Miles and Huberman (1994) recommend stipulating the boundaries for the cases that can be used in field research. This specifies who and what will, and will not, be studied and provides further focus for the study. The unit of analysis in the present research is the work relationship between the teleworker and their manager. This meant that both teleworkers and their managers needed to be included in the research.

The specific criteria used for selecting cases were theoretically driven (Miles & Huberman, 1994). That is, the choice of participants, episodes and interactions being studied were driven by the conceptual question. Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 29) say that:

*To get to the construct, we need to see different instances of it, at different moments, in different places, with different people. The prime concern is with the **conditions** under which the construct or theory operates, not with the generalization of the findings to other settings. [their emphasis]*

The criteria used in selecting the teleworker – manager sets were that:

1. They were in a permanent work relationship, either full time or part time, not on contract or in casual work. This meant that the work relationship was ongoing, as opposed to short-term or temporary.
2. The work relationship was hierarchical, that is, that it was a manager and employee work relationship. The emphasis in the telework literature on the issue of control led to this focus on hierarchical relationships.
3. The telework arrangement was formal rather than ad hoc. This meant that participants were teleworking on a regular basis<sup>8</sup> and that ‘virtuality’ was a characteristic of the work relationship.

---

<sup>8</sup> In this study, regular was defined as a minimum of teleworking one day per week, every week.

4. The telework arrangement involved the geographical separation of the manager and the teleworker. This was included to ensure that ‘virtuality’ was a characteristic of the work relationship.

The teleworker – manager sets involved in Stages 2 and 3 of the research met the above criteria and were also selected on the basis of access.

#### *4.4.3.1.2 Gaining access to cases*

The selection of cases used in the final in-depth interviews needs to be discussed in relation to the issue of access. Throughout the study, gaining adequate access to teleworker – manager sets was an ongoing problem. Various strategies were adopted, including the identification of organisations having telework arrangements in place. A number of sources were used including: newspaper, magazine and television reports on telework, telework conference programs, attending telework conferences, and referral. Often, initial telephone contact was made with potential organisations and an interview was organised, if agreed to, with the key contact for the telework program. This led to follow-on interviews with teleworker – manager sets in a small number of organisations. An alternative strategy was to use various media to publicise the research. Advertisements were placed in local papers in the Gosford and Blue Mountains districts<sup>9</sup> to advertise the research and encourage teleworkers and managers to participate in the study (see Appendix C, on page 166). A press release about the research was printed in the Newcastle Herald (see Appendix D, on page 167), and a website was developed to promote the research (<http://www1.tpgi.com.au/users/kerryh/>). There was an extremely limited response to these forms of promotion. Only one person responded to the advertisements, and they fell outside the above stated boundaries of the study; one person responded to the newspaper story, a council employee who was interested in the results of the study; and there were no contacts from the website. The most successful method of recruiting teleworker – manager sets was by word of mouth. This involved talking to people about the research, for example friends, family, colleagues, and students, and asking if they knew anyone who was working that way and organising an introduction.

---

<sup>9</sup> These areas were targeted as a large number of people commute to Sydney from these two locations. The RTA have established a telecentre in Gosford.

#### *4.4.3.1.3 Number of cases*

The difficulty in gaining long-term access to teleworker – manager sets meant that only a small number of cases were used in the study. However, the number of cases used in the study falls well within the recommended number suggested by various authors (eg Eisenhardt, 1989; Perry & Coote, 1994; Yin, 1994). Yin (1994) points out that replication logic, not sampling logic, be used in the case study design. Using replication logic means that each case is treated as an individual experiment, in contrast to the sampling logic used in quantitative methods. This means that each case must be carefully selected so that it either predicts similar results, that is, literal replication; or produces contrasting results for predictable reasons, that is, theoretical replication (Yin, 1994). A literal replication approach was adopted, where evidence was gathered across the cases to investigate the research question.

#### **4.4.3.2 Stage 3 - research procedure**

##### *4.4.3.2.1 Initial design*

The initial research design for the Stage 3 Case Studies was to send teleworkers and their managers a series of email questions on a fortnightly basis over a six month timeframe. The purpose of this design was to obtain ‘here and now’ accounts of the telework relationship and study the changes over a period of time. This six month period would be divided into three, two month blocks (see Figure 4-1). At the outset of the 6 month block an initial interview would be conducted with the teleworker and their manager together, to explain the nature of the research, how they would be involved, and to gain their commitment to all facets of the research program. A 2 month block of email questions, sent fortnightly, would follow the initial interview. At the end of the first two months, a group interview would take place, which would allow the collective feedback and joint scrutiny of email data that had been collected to that time. This process would be followed by another 2 month block of email questions, followed by a group interview, and then a third block. The first block of questions was to probe performance and control issues, the second block of questions would examine authority and autonomy issues and the third block would investigate commitment and support issues. This research design was based on the key concepts outlined in the framework.



Figure 4-1 Initial Research Design

The above research design was implemented and the email questions were sent to participants on a fortnightly basis over a two month period (see Appendix E, on page 168 for interview questions). The response to the email questions was very limited in terms of the detail of individual responses and it was found that the group interview situation provided a much greater depth of information. The limited response gained from the email questions resulted in this approach being abandoned after the first block of email questions were conducted.<sup>10</sup>

#### 4.4.3.2.2 *Modified Research design*

The unsuccessful email interviews were followed by a series of group interviews with the teleworker and their manager (see Table 4-5). The purpose of the group interviews was to enable the teleworker and their manager to express his or her own views regarding the work relationship in the context of the other person hearing it. It was thought that a group technique would reveal more than individual interviews about the relationship between the pair. For example, the way the pair interacted could be observed in the group interview situation. Also, areas where the two parties disagreed or reached agreement very quickly could be further investigated during the course of the interview.

#### 4.4.3.2.3 *The group interviews*

The key concepts identified from the literature were used to guide the development of the group interview questions. While the focus of the email interviews had been to track the changes in the work relationship by gathering ‘here and now’ accounts over a period of time, the group interviews focused on getting descriptive accounts of the work relationship and the way it had developed to the present time. The change in the research design was associated with the exploratory approach adopted for the research. That is,

<sup>10</sup> Two of the teleworker – manager sets joined the study after it was found that email was an unsuitable way of collecting information and so were not sent email interviews.



rather than pursuing a design that was not effective in producing the rich data that was needed for a qualitative analysis, an alternative approach was adopted.

During the group interviews, the teleworkers and managers provided ‘here and now’ accounts of their work relationship in the telework setting; as well as reflective accounts of the development of their work relationship in the telework setting, and in the co-located setting, if applicable. Using an interview technique recommended by Kvale (1996), interviewees were encouraged to provide examples of the way they work together and to describe important incidents in their telework relationship, and their feelings about those incidents. This provided a rich source of descriptive material about their work relationships in telework settings. While the exact structure of the interviews varied between teleworker – manager sets because of the semi-structured approach, key questions were asked across each of the teleworker – manager sets that probed the following areas:

<b>Interview questions</b>
How do they solve problems?
How do they make decisions?
How do they provide feedback to each other?
How important is physical presence in their work relationship?
For teleworkers - How are they able to perform in the telework setting?
For managers - How are they able to control in the telework setting?
How has their work relationship changed?
How did trust develop in their work relationship?

Many researchers stress the importance of including strategies for increasing the validity and reliability of qualitative research studies (Eisenhardt, 1989; Johnson, 1998; Parkhe, 1993; Perry & Coote, 1994; Yin, 1994). Yin (1994) refers to the above set of questions as the interview protocol and recommends using a protocol to increase the validity of constructs developed in the case analysis. This is because the interview protocol enables a chain of evidence to be established, where explicit links are made between the questions asked, the data collected and the conclusions drawn.

Other strategies were also incorporated to increase the validity of the research. For example, the interviews were recorded on cassette tapes and verbatim transcripts

prepared, enabling low inference indicators to be used in the analysis. Johnson (1998) says that the use of low inference indicators enhances interpretive validity in the research. Interpretive validity refers to ‘the degree to which the research participants’ viewpoints, thoughts, feelings, intentions and experiences are accurately understood by the researcher and portrayed in the research report’ (Johnson, 1998). Verbatim accounts provide the lowest inference indicators as the participants’ exact words are used. This enables the reader to hear how the participants think and feel about issues and experiences in their own words, rather than only reading an interpretation of their accounts. Verbatim accounts were used extensively in the case study summaries.

#### 4.5 Analysis

Yin (1994) refers to the importance of providing adequate documentation of the processes used in the case analysis. The documentation of processes used in this study was assisted by the use of QSR NVivo software. This software enabled the ‘tracking’ of the entire project. For example, each of the interviews was imported into NVivo and coded. The codes were developed inductively from the interview material as well as using the broader concepts developed in the framework. This was not a one-off process. The codes were changed many times throughout the course of the research. However, at each stage of the analysis, the categories used to code the interviews were clearly defined and documented. Therefore, while other readers may arrive at alternative interpretations of the results and propose alternative theories, it is clear how the concepts and theory have been developed.

An analysis of the interview data has also been conducted in the following way. Initially, accounts of the work relationships have been constructed from the perspective of the teleworker and the perspective of the manager, using the data obtained from the interviews. These accounts were very descriptive and this allowed the unique patterns of each case to emerge. All participants in the study were provided with a draft of their work relationship story for review and comment. It is interesting to note that none of the participants felt that changes needed to be made to their stories. Many authors claim that providing participants with the opportunity to provide feedback during the analysis adds to the overall validity of the report (eg Johnson, 1998; Yin, 1994).

Summaries were made from each of the cases and these were used to provide the data for the next stage of the analysis, which was an analysis of the work relationships using the

concepts from the framework developed in Chapter 3. The key findings from the analysis were used to develop the grounded theory in Chapter 6.

A process of peer review was incorporated into the analysis to enhance theoretical validity (Johnson, 1998). Theoretical validity is obtained by ‘fitting’ the theoretical explanation to the data and this leads to credible and defensible theory development. At various stages of the theory development process, critical review and feedback was sought from an academic colleague. My research supervisor also played an important role in providing critical review at various stages of the research.

## 4.6 Limitations of the research design

### 4.6.1 Access

Gummesson (1991) points out that the level of access that a researcher has to the phenomenon being studied influences the overall quality of the research. He discusses access not just in terms of physical access but also mental access. An example of the difficulty in gaining mental access is provided by Taylor and Bogdan (1998) who point out that people have varying abilities to provide detailed accounts of what they have been through and what they feel about it. Often, teleworkers and managers found it difficult to discuss their work relationship in detail. One reason they found this difficult was because I was asking them to articulate the often unconscious aspects of their work relationship that they took for granted. For example, one participant in the study said:

*You can relate it back to your own life when people say to you ‘what have you been doing?’ and you say ‘nothing’. And you think, ‘I know I haven’t been doing nothing’ but you don’t think that you’ve got anything too outstanding to offer. It’s like ‘we ate well, we had clean clothes blah blah blah, ... I got this done’, but none of it’s worth mentioning.*

An interesting limitation that developed in the study was the limited responses that I encountered with the email questions sent to the teleworkers and their managers. The extremely limited responses that came through via email highlighted the limitations of this medium that both teleworkers and managers referred to in the interviews (these are discussed in the following chapter). The brevity of the email responses meant that an

alternative research design needed to be adopted and while this may not have been a ‘perfect’ design, it emphasised the necessity in field-based research of ‘making do’ with what is available, and the importance of being able to adapt and modify the research design.

#### *4.6.2 Case study method*

Various critiques have been made of the case study method. These include problems such as the method results in overly complex theories, sacrificing parsimony, (eg Eisenhardt, 1989; Parkhe, 1993); as well as theory development that is idiosyncratic (Eisenhardt, 1989, p. 547). The general critiques of qualitative methods, such as the problem of researcher bias (Johnson, 1998) are also directed at this method.

The case study method is often criticised for being too idiosyncratic, leading to results that cannot be generalised (Eisenhardt, 1989). However, researchers such as Yin (1994) and (Eisenhardt, 1989) have contributed to the development of rigorous case study research methods which address this particular limitation. For example, Yin (1994) advocates the use of replication logic in the case study design which contributes to construct validity and the generalisability of the findings. Eisenhardt (1989) also points out that the generalisability of research findings is enhanced when a comparison is made with similar literature. However, rather than trying to achieve results that can be generalised, this research aims to develop theory, grounded in empirical data, that can be used as a starting point for ongoing research on work relationships in telework settings. It has been noted by prominent scholars conducting research on work relationships that more situationally grounded, substantive theory needs to be developed in this area (Gabarro, 1990). Therefore, the critique of the case study method in terms of it being too idiosyncratic, may indeed be a strength for this particular area of research.

Other criticisms of case study methods include criticisms aimed at qualitative techniques in general. These include the problem of researcher bias, resulting from the selective observation and selective recording of information, and poor validity (Johnson, 1998). Various strategies have been incorporated into the present study to try and overcome these limitations. These strategies include the use of: low inference descriptors, clear documentation, participant feedback, and peer review. The way these strategies have been used in this study has been discussed throughout this chapter.

#### 4.7 Overall summary

A case study method has been applied to explore work relationships in telework settings. In-depth interviews conducted with six teleworker – manager sets have provided information on how each set interacts in a telework setting, and how the work relationship had developed to the present time.

While the limitations of a case study method have been discussed, various strategies have been used in an attempt to address these problem areas. For example, validity has been promoted by the use of low inference descriptors, participant feedback and peer review. Clear documentation has been provided on the processes used in selecting the cases, the data collection procedures and the analysis. The purpose of these strategies is to provide clarity so that the research is viewed as ‘plausible, credible, trustworthy and, therefore, defensible’ (Johnson, 1998).

## CHAPTER 5 – ANALYSIS

### 5 Analysis

#### 5.1 Introduction

In this chapter the interview data collected with each of the teleworker – manager sets is analysed. In Part 1 of the analysis descriptive accounts of each teleworker – manager set are provided. Each of the cases provides a unique story about work relationships in telework settings from the perspective of the teleworker and the perspective of the manager. In Part 2, the work relationships are analysed using the themes from the framework developed in Chapter 3.

#### 5.2 Part 1: the teleworker – manager cases

Table 5-1 provides a timetable of the in-depth interviews that were conducted with each of the teleworker – manager sets. The table also provides information about the duration of the telework relationship when each of the interviews was conducted.

In order to provide a systematic analysis of the interviews, the following structure has been adopted for analysing each of the cases. Initially, background information is provided about each of the teleworkers, their managers, the organisation in which they work, and the details of their telework arrangement. The labels used for telework vary throughout the analysis, for example ‘telecommute’ or ‘home-based work’ may be used in place of telework. The label that appears is that which is used in the organisation and by the teleworkers and their managers. Next, a descriptive account of the interaction between the teleworker and their manager is provided including details about the frequency of interaction, where this interaction takes place and the communication media that are used. Finally, the work relationship in each of the cases is described from the perspective of the teleworker and the perspective of the manager. This information has been compiled from the interviews that were conducted with teleworkers and their managers.

Table 5-1 Summary of interviews

Org.	Teleworker – manager set	Commenced telework relationship	E-mail inter-views	Duration of telework relationship at time of e-mail interview	Individual interview	Duration of telework relationship at time of individual interview	Group interview	Duration of telework relationship at time of group interview
Research Inc.	Rebecca - Greg	early 1999	1/8/99 16/8/99 6/9/99 20/12/99	<1 year <1 year <1 year <1 year	March 99	< 1 year	5/11/99 3/4/00	<1 year 1-2 years
Research Inc.	Tania - Greg	Jan '97	1/8/99 16/8/99 6/9/99 20/12/99	> 2 years > 2 years > 2 years > 2 years	13/3/98 24/7/98	1-2 years 1-2 years	5/11/99 3/4/00	> 2 years > 2 years
'NRG'	Peter - Cath	March 1998	1/8/99 16/8/99 6/9/99 20/12/99	1-2 years 1-2 years 1-2 years 1-2 years	7/7/98 29/7/98	<1 year	12/10/99 15/3/00	1-2 years > 2 years
'NetCom'	Colin - John	1996	No email interview	NA	no individual interview	NA	6/3/00 15/5/00 24/7/00	> 2 years > 2 years > 2 years
'Infocheck'	Jennifer - Anne	October 1999	No email interview	NA	no individual interview	NA	27/4/01 25/5/01 22/6/01	1-2 years 1-2 years 1-2 years
'Infocheck'	Leanne - Anne	October 1999	No email interview	NA	no individual interview	NA	27/4/01 25/5/01 22/6/01	1-2 years 1-2 years 1-2 years

### *5.2.1 Colin and John*

#### **5.2.1.1 Background information**

Colin works as a technical support engineer with a global telecommunications company. This involves fault diagnosis and rectification of communication systems. Colin works fulltime and usually attends the office on Mondays and Fridays. He works from home on the other days.<sup>11</sup> Colin commenced telecommuting when it was offered as part of a trial in 1996. He has been telecommuting since that time. John has been Colin's manager for the duration of his telework arrangement.

John is the manager of the Customer Service team for the Australia – New Zealand section of the organisation. Part of his role is the management of the technical support team in which Colin is a member. John and Colin have worked together as members of the same support team since 1988. Colin left the organisation for about three years in the early 1990's but returned before John became manager of the support team in the mid-nineties.

During the time that I interviewed John and Colin the structure of the support team changed. It quadrupled in size and was organised into a three-tiered structure. The first tier were handling initial customer issues and were based either in Melbourne or Sydney. The first level tier escalated customer issues to the second and third tiers as required.

Colin is a member of the third tier of the support team. This is the most senior level. His team is geographically dispersed with members in both Sydney and Melbourne. At the time the interviews were conducted only members of the third tier were telecommuting. However, there were plans to offer telecommuting to the intermediate level at some time in the future. Telecommuting was viewed by management as an incentive that could be included in employment packages for employees working at these levels in the organisation. Of the support team members that were based in Sydney, only Colin and another member of the team teleworked, the rest of the team work in the office.

#### **5.2.1.2 Descriptions of the interaction between John and Colin**

Colin and John interact frequently, sometimes on a daily basis. Colin says that the main reason for these interactions is so that he can keep John up to date with the status of

---

<sup>11</sup> In an email correspondence in December 2001, Colin informed me that he was working from home 100% of the time. However, at the time of the interviews, he worked from home three days per week.



current problems that he is handling. This is in the form of regular logs (sometimes daily) that Colin submits to John, and regular conference calls. This information may also be forwarded to other parties involved in the particular problem being handled, for example, customers and more senior management. Colin says that the interaction that he has with John is more about keeping him informed, rather than working on problems together. Colin is responsible for making all the decisions in relation to the actual resolution of problems. Colin's role involves the technical resolution of customer problems whereas John's role, as manager, involves considering problems from the broader perspective of: 'What's happening within the company? Do the executive know about it? Is there politics from the customer side?' (John)

John acts as a contact point within the organisation, both for Colin and other support team members, and external customers.

*Colin: it's a matter of keeping John informed of what we're doing. As he said, he doesn't manage us on a day-to-day basis as far as problems, what we should be doing and how we should be doing it. But still he is often the go between, from a management point of view, very rarely do we directly face the customer. That's often John's responsibility, if required.*

John and Colin interact in distance mode through various communications media. John prefers to use the telephone rather than email for communicating with Colin because he finds it more immediate and more personal. Another reason the telephone is preferred is because of the large number of emails they both receive each day and the difficulty in managing this amount of email. John and Colin discuss the difficulty they experience in managing their email in the excerpt below. When I asked John why he preferred to use the telephone he answered:

*John. [It's] Easier. I get too many emails as it is.*

*Colin. You get 60 emails a day. It's really hard to manage them. There's so much stuff that I just don't read. I don't get the chance to read.*

*John. If you don't delete it at the time it just accumulates. It's nice to ring someone sometimes and they answer the phone. Or if you want something you just say 'I need to know about blah, blah, blah' ...Probably forget it in a few days but who cares... I've been trying to organise a meeting with someone. We've traded about four emails now. I personally would rather pick the phone up and say 'alright, what do you think? Wednesday? No? Well what about this time or that time?' Which is probably what I do with Colin. People just don't want to do that. I'm trading over a two day period, 4 or 5 emails and in the end they're just clogging up your emails.*

When I asked Colin about his views on email he answered:

*Colin. I don't think about it to be honest. To me it's just another way of communicating. I have trouble managing my emails. I might get 50 [a day]. I've got 2000 emails sitting in my in-box.*

*Kerry. Do any of the [customer] problems come through to you by email?*

*Colin. Yeah. They're the ones I focus on. I pull those out into a separate folder. I manage it that way. This company sends so many emails. Emails copied to everybody. You just don't get a chance to read them all. I'll glance at them and that's about it. But what do I do with them? I don't really want to delete them because there may be something that I need to go back to. So I sort of file them away.*

John finds it easier to get in contact with Colin, who is teleworking, than other organisational members who might be co-located in the office.

John. *I find when Colin is telecommuting he is almost always contactable on the phone which is not the case with most NetCom people. Most NetCom people you ring, they never answer the phone.*

Kerry. *So that could be people who are just a couple of offices away?*

John. *Exactly. I have enormous problems with getting in contact, we're on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor, with people on this floor [6<sup>th</sup> floor]. Sometimes when I know they're there, I just come up on the lift and find them. Whereas with Colin, I think it's true, isn't it? We don't even communicate even a lot with voice mail because you nearly always answer the phone. And I nearly, in a lot of cases, probably ask Colin questions, more so than the other way. Because Colin has his things and he looks after what he does very well. So I don't get a lot of issues. So we communicate that way.*

Neither Colin nor John believes that it is important for Colin to be present in the office for him to be able to perform his job. For example, when Colin was describing the way he might resolve a system problem with a customer he said:

Colin: *The people that you're dealing with really who are affected by this [problem] are sitting in NZ. We can't hike across there every day to speak to them. I don't believe it [working from home] makes any difference. The guy that I'm dealing with very closely in the States is sitting at his desk at home as well. We speak every, every single day. I don't think it matters where we make that telephone call from.*

John: *In the main part, certainly the customer's in NZ, the country managers are in NZ, my manager works in North Sydney, Gord's in this building. The point is that most of the people that are interested in this sort*

*of update [from Colin] aren't in this building anyway. So you might as well say they're remote to Colin even if he was sitting here in [the office].*

In other words, for Colin to perform his work he needs to interact with people who are located at a distance, and some of these people are around the other side of the globe. Therefore, it is not important that he is situated in a particular location.

Colin has been provided with the necessary equipment to enable him to perform his job at home. For example, Colin is able to continue working on problems that have been logged as he has a lab set up at home.

*John: Colin's got a lab set up at home, he's got a system, he's got some PC based tools. There's lots of stuff that can be done without even having to [come into the office]*

### **5.2.1.3 The work relationship from the perspective of the manager**

John says that Colin 'does make literally all the decisions'. John describes the way he manages Colin and other members of the support team in the following way:

*They're not a high management requirement team. They basically know what they're doing. They really don't need me telling them day to day work wise what they're doing. And I try not to, I try to remember my experiences as a support engineer and not tell those guys how to fix problems. Try to anyway. It's not a low level sort of day to day do this, do this, do this. You know walk in, in the morning and here's your allocations. These guys know what they're doing, they get their work. It comes in from certain areas and they know how that happens...I don't really need to ring and say 'ok Colin you need to do this today, that today, this today'. That sort of thing. He knows what he's doing, he knows the work that's coming in. It's quite good. Good for me.*

John believes the close monitoring of Colin's work is impractical because:

*John: ...Colin's probably got twenty odd problems [a day] that overall that you'd look at. Even if you looked at their top 3 or 4, times four [workgroup members], I'd be spending all my day monitoring those problems, if I did it at a very [basic level], so I just have to accept the fact that these guys are going to do the right thing.*

John considers Colin to be an experienced operator. He associates experience with hierarchical position held within the organisation. In other words, in order to be able to perform successfully in Colin's position an employee requires many years of experience. In explaining the way that customer problems are handled in the organisation he said:

*John: But when it gets to be a certain type of problem, through processes and experience, it's determined that it needs to go to Colin's level. And at times, Colin will need to go and get some higher level support as well. It [the problem resolution process] is driven by process and experience. You could probably never write it up and have people who don't understand the products and the way the business is done follow it. It's not that sort of thing. It's not like making a model. There's a lot of interpretation there and that's the experience. And the people who move into Colin's role get there after those many years of experience. So we don't have people fall into a position like that without that relevant experience. [Experience is gained] As they move through the team and accumulate that knowledge over a period of time.*

John expects that Colin will be able to successfully organise his own work.

*John: Colin's a reasonably senior guy in the team and he's been around a long time. He's had lots of experience...you can expect that he knows what*

*he's doing. He would probably not welcome, nor does he need me telling him constantly what he should be doing. I don't need to do that. Any guy who ends up in a situation like Colin's in, I would be really worried if I had to keep telling him all the time how to do his job. He's very experienced.*

The key factor stressed by John that enables him to manage with ease in a telework environment is that Colin is a self-manager.

*John: That's the other thing, too, these guys are in a professional sort of role and you expect that that's part of the criteria for someone in that role. That they have that attitude. That they're prepared to take that ownership of the issues that they have. So they feel that 'oh I'm not just going to work on it for 5 minutes and then hand it onto somebody else'. They're the somebody else, and they accept that. They're prepared to work on it. ... when we look at telecommuting, I wouldn't offer it to someone at the lower level. Part of that would be because it's an incentive and part of the incentive package for the guys up here, but also too, you don't want to give it to somebody who you can't be sure is going to do, you're not sure will do the right thing.*

While John advocates ownership and responsibility for employees in Colin's position, he is also aware of the some of the implications that a high autonomy work setting might create for teleworkers.

*John. I still think a culture has to develop. It's easy for a company to say 'oh great, the guys are there, they're not supposed to but if they're prepared to work that's fine'. It's not a long-term issue [meaning that it is an issue that needs to be addressed soon]. Especially given that we'll*

*target telecommuting at the top level of the support guys who are probably, arguably the guys under the most pressure to start with. If we create an environment that encourages them to work 7 days a week, even if it's not fulltime, then we'll burn them out. Not burn them out, wear them out. We should be aware of it.*

John has had the opportunity to watch Colin's performance for many years and this has contributed to the development of trust in their work relationship.

*John: You look for people who can work autonomously, without a lot of instruction. ... You learn that down here [ie by observing their performance when they are in lower level positions]. The sort of people that get into the role that Colin's doing, and these other top level guys, already know all this stuff. You've built that understanding down here. If the guy doesn't [operate autonomously], it doesn't mean that he may not do a good job, it's not the point, but he wouldn't end up doing this particular role because he wouldn't be well suited. In fact, I suspect it would break people who couldn't handle that sort of thing, very, very quickly. I think that's true. You look for those sort of people. You get the opportunity because we know we're not just going to hire somebody off the street. You know we might take a chance and bring someone in from elsewhere, from North America, but even then you'd have to be pretty careful. And I think that certainly helps if these guys want to telecommute. Because you already know, like you're happy to trust that they're doing, they're working at their problems, they're doing the right thing and all that and they're achieving the results. You get a pretty good idea what someone's doing from that, it's good, it's easy. It sort of automatically flows.*

However, John does not think that trust is a pre-requisite for all work relationships in telework settings. For example, John believes that if work can be easily monitored at a distance then it is also suited to a telework setting.

*John: we may have roles that would be well suited to telecommuting, simply because we can monitor their activity... at the moment we have a low level call handler. It could be conceivable that I may not even know that person but we could have them set up for telecommuting. The reason being that we could monitor their activity on their rates, and see how many calls they're taking. We don't really have to trust them at all...we don't offer telecommuting to these people at the moment anyway but if we did, I wouldn't have to know them so well because I could look at performance for their calls... Whereas with these guys [Colin and his colleagues] you couldn't even do that. Number of phone calls, even network PC activity doesn't relate to what Colin's doing. I know that. You couldn't really use that as a measurement tool. So you just have to look at another way of doing it.*

The work performance of Colin and his colleagues is difficult to measure so John places importance on the teleworkers being able to manage themselves. However, there is the potential to receive feedback on Colin's performance from customers of the service.

*John: But at the end of the day I guess you do have checkpoints...like a check point for us would be if a customer rings up and complains. Somebody maybe wasn't doing it quite the right way. We find out. And everyone knows that.*

Even though much of their work is carried out at a distance, John believes that it is important to have face-to-face contact at times. This is because:



*John: when you're talking to someone, I still think it's important that you know who that person is. You might know their name and you might have spoken to them a hundred times on the phone but it really, really helps if you've seen them. You know what they're like. If there's a down side [to telecommuting], and there's probably lots of them, as there are up sides, one of them is that it makes it that little more difficult to get everyone together and for people to meet each other.*

John discussed the importance of socialising newer members of the first tier of the support team into the practices of the more experienced team members. His comments highlight his belief that the experience required by the first tier support team members will only be gained in the face-to-face setting.

*So the guys right down at the low level, even though they've got a couple of years, there are things that they're doing now that are at a higher level than they're used to. So we really want those guys to interwork with the more senior people who are all locked in the one room. So that interaction needs to take place in the office. Now as those people progress through the organisation, certainly they would get the opportunity to work from home. But at the moment the feeling is that we want that first in layer interacting with the more senior people in the office. We might review that in the future. I don't know. But personally I think that's probably a good idea ...develop the trust, look at the work practices, try and get an understanding of what the people do, let them build up the experience, and in the future maybe they could telecommute. At this stage it's a little too early days for us to be making that quick decision. We want to see some volume, some mass in the office, and let those people interact. And then move on through the organisation.*

John believes that performance needs to be established first in the face-to-face setting before employees move into a telework setting.

#### **5.2.1.4 The work relationship from the perspective of the teleworker**

John and Colin's work relationship has developed gradually over ten years. The only major shift in their work relationship that either can recall is when John changed roles from support team engineer to team manager. This meant that there was a shift in the level of contact that they had with each other.

*COLIN: I think it's like any working relationship where prior to John's management role we were pretty much just co-workers. But the group even then, there were three of us then, and we still all had our own areas to look after. There was certainly interaction within the group. If somebody had some expertise in a certain thing you'd certainly ask and receive help. But we were fairly autonomous in our roles. With John moving into a management role, I was dealing with him far more on a day to day basis with him in that role. Obviously because he's looking after the entire group, not just the field of expertise that he had at the time. So it certainly changed then. I think we had far more interaction in the current role than before.*

Trust is named by Colin as an important feature of his work relationship with John. The following quote provides Colin's perspective on why trust is so important in their work relationship.

*Colin: It's vital. Without that trust it's only going to add to John's workload. If he has to constantly go around and check up on what his guys are doing, then it has to make some impact. I think that the group as it is, is way beyond that. We don't need checking up. We know what we have to do. It doesn't always mean that we achieve that. But it's not through lack*

*of trying or lack of motivation or effort. It's just workload to some extent. So that trust is very important. I would certainly not appreciate anybody breathing down my neck on a day to day basis. And I think, even being checked up on from time to time, we've probably had disagreements on that. And I get a little bit volatile. But John has a requirement to do so he needs to ask questions from time to time. Whether I see if that's correct or not. But the trust is vital.*

It appears that trust was already well established in the work relationship prior to Colin commencing telework and Colin believes this facilitated the shift to a telework relationship.

*Colin: I think if you look back to the early days of when I started telecommuting, that's what made that transition fairly easy because that trust was already there. I didn't have to prove that.*

Trust has been maintained throughout the telework relationship.

*Colin: I don't think it was ever a case of 'well I must be here to answer the phone because John might ring up checking on me'. He may do that, that's his prerogative, but I think 90% of the time he'll get an answer rather than a voice mail. So I don't think about trust anymore. It's just there. If John left the group and a new manager came in, then that process would probably start again.*

Trust has developed over a period of time in their work relationship. The development of trust is related to the meeting of expectations in regard to performance. For example, Colin describes the way trust developed in their work relationship:

*Colin: No. I don't think trust is always there. When you first meet somebody you don't know, you can have a good feeling about somebody*

*but the only way you can develop true trust is over time. And I think that you have to earn that trust as well. And I think that John sees me as a person who tries very hard to get things done. And who hopefully does what he says he will do, and the reverse applies here [ie that John does what he says he will do]...I think because we have known each other for some time and have worked together, that trust is now there. I don't know whether the same trust would apply to some fresh employee coming onto the group. I think that from John's point of view you have to imply a little bit of trust. You have to give the person some time and some scope to prove themselves. And I think once that's done, you've laid the groundwork with that trust. You pretty much don't have to go near that unless something dramatic happens.*

Colin feels that little has changed in their work relationship over the years, even in regard to the informal aspects of their work relationship.

*Colin: I don't think there's been a big change in that [informal] dimension of it. You know somebody well, you'll tell them certain things. There's lots of discussions in this place that are not particularly work related. You know, 'how's the family' all this sort of stuff, 'what are you doing?' That hasn't changed...We still sit down and have a conversation that is not strictly manager - employee. I think over time you work out when to assume those [formal] roles and when you don't need to assume them.*

Colin raised the issue of knowing when to stop working in the telework setting and the difficulty of separating work from home life.

*Colin: That's something I still haven't got my head around with telecommuting is that at 5 or 6 in the evening I need to walk out of that office and close the door. That's it, don't go back in. It is so hard to [not] just sit there and sit there and sit there and go and have dinner and come back and do some work. Weekends, I'm sending the odd email on weekends. I have to get away from that because I have trouble switching off... But I'm getting there... I have a separate office for work. From my point of view that's a workplace. That's where I go to work. Not where I go to write a letter or read a book. That's a work environment. Just keep the hell out of it when it's appropriate. It's something I'm getting better [at]. Really I have to because I can't be on the job 24 hours a day.*

The high autonomy in the work relationship and the shift to self-control mechanisms may result in teleworkers working a much longer workday than they would if they were in the office.

*Colin. I have one of those phones [points to a telephone system on the table where we are sitting] sitting on my desk at home and somebody rings my extension, they don't have any idea where I've answered that from. I'm in a bad habit of activating my phone and forgetting about it. It's not uncommon to be sitting there watching TV at 10 o'clock at night and the phone will ring. And it will be somebody from North America. They don't expect to get you, they're prepared to go to voicemail but the fact you've picked the phone up, it blows them away. You find you just don't get away. But that's more a bad habit.*

Colin referred to the appeal of working beyond the required work hours in order to keep the problem resolution process moving along.

*Colin: if something can be gained, especially when you're dealing with the guys in North America, you can almost keep something going 24 hours a day. If they ask a question and I'm there late at night or on a weekend and I can answer that question... to keep the momentum up, certainly.*

#### **5.2.1.5 Summary**

John (the manager) and Colin (the teleworker) have frequent contact with each other, sometimes on a daily basis, in their provision of fault rectification services for customers of a multinational telecommunications company. However being in frequent contact does not suggest that Colin is dependent on John for advice or information. Colin operates quite independently of John and makes all the decisions in relation to the resolution of customer problems. Colin works more closely with his colleagues who are geographically dispersed around the globe.

When talking about their work relationship, John placed emphasis on the trust he has in Colin. John talked about trust in relation to Colin's level of experience. The type of behaviours John associated with being 'experienced' include: taking ownership of problems, being able to handle and fix problems and achieving results. John expects Colin to take responsibility for his work. John felt that Colin's ability to operate autonomously was important and he linked autonomy with experience. John has confidence in Colin's ability to perform autonomously in the telework setting. John developed confidence in Colin's performance by working with him on the support team for many years. This provided Colin with the opportunity to demonstrate that he could operate autonomously. John believes that performance needs to be established first in the face-to-face setting before employees move into a telework setting.

Colin enjoys teleworking and moved from teleworking three days each week to teleworking every day while I was in contact with him. Colin also placed great emphasis on the importance of trust in his work relationship with John. Trust was important to Colin as it signified that he did not need to be checked on by John. Colin did not feel comfortable with being closely supervised by John in their work relationship.

### *5.2.2 Greg, Rebecca and Tania*

Research Inc. is an independent, not-for-profit organisation which undertakes socio-economic research for business, industry, government and the wider community. Research Inc. is a relatively small organisation with just under 20 permanent employees. Many employees telework informally but some employees have commenced teleworking on a formal basis, that is, they work from home on set days each week. I interviewed Tania and Rebecca who both have a formal telework arrangement.

#### **5.2.2.1 Background information**

##### *5.2.2.1.1 Tania*

Tania works fulltime at the Research Inc. as an administrator. She is responsible for management systems including accounting, payroll, and job costing. When I first interviewed Tania in March 1998 she was working at home one day per week, on a Tuesday. Tania had worked with the organisation for nearly thirteen and a half years at that point in time. She commenced telecommuting on a formal basis at the beginning of 1997 when her first child was born. Prior to that time she had telecommuted on an informal basis, as do many other members of the organisation. During the course of the research, Tania's telecommuting arrangement changed with the birth of her twins. At present, she still works fulltime but telecommutes more often. She works at the office every second day, in the afternoons. Tania's manager is Greg.

##### *5.2.2.1.2 Rebecca*

Rebecca is a member of the Marketing Team at Research Inc. Rebecca coordinates the sponsorship program, produces publications and media releases, organises functions, and maintains marketing products. Rebecca works fulltime, working in the office on Monday, Tuesday and Friday and working from home on Wednesday and Thursday. She commenced teleworking in May 1998, after returning to work from maternity leave. Rebecca started working with Research Inc. in October 1993. When I commenced the interviews, Rebecca's immediate manager was Jeff, the leader of the support team. An initial interview was conducted with Jeff, but shortly after, Jeff left the organisation. Greg then became Rebecca's immediate manager.

##### *5.2.2.1.3 Greg*

Greg is the CEO of Research Inc. He joined the organisation in this role in 1982. The organisational structure of Research Inc. is relatively flat with only two tiers. Greg is the

CEO, and all other employees are on the next tier. Greg has been Tania's manager from six months after she commenced employment with the organisation in 1984 and he has been Rebecca's immediate manager since early 1999.

#### **5.2.2.2 Descriptions of the interaction between Greg, Tania and Rebecca**

The main reason for Tania and Rebecca to be interacting with Greg is when they need to find something out. For example, Greg says:

*Greg: I guess the communication is more on a need to know basis. If they have identified areas that they think I need to know something, or that they have questions about, they'll contact me. And if there are things that I have, then I would just talk to them, I would contact them. It's generally more about asking questions, rather than necessarily directing them and saying 'you need to do this or do that'. An example is the other day on the central coast, I called up Rebecca and I just left a message on her message bank on Sunday night. I was driving, it was 11 o'clock at night and it was just sort of a thing where I thought 'I should ask Rebecca that'. So I left a message on there, knowing that she'd get it sometime. It wasn't a critical thing. I guess a lot of things that I talk to Rebecca and Tania about aren't things that have got to be done tomorrow, or next day or in an hour. They're more longterm issues. And so they are probably random thoughts. The neuron fires up and 'oh yeah'. So rather than interrupting, it's great to have a system where you can record those thoughts. As an idea that later on we can talk about.*

Tania and Rebecca communicate with Greg frequently, sometimes on a daily basis. Greg considers communication to be a particularly important aspect of his work relationship with both Tania and Rebecca because of the 'interrelated nature' of their work. Greg relies on information from both Tania and Rebecca in order for him to complete his work, and vice versa. Much of their interaction takes place when Greg, Tania and Rebecca are



all out of the office. Therefore distance communication media, particularly telephone and email, are used regularly. Neither Tania nor Greg thought that teleworking impacted on these interactions. For example:

*Greg: Given I am also out of the office a lot, I talk to them on the phone when I am in the car or between meetings. There is therefore little difference from me contacting them remotely when I am travelling and/or they are at home.*

When I asked ‘Do you think telecommuting has any impact on how you go about solving work related problems?’ Tania answered:

*Tania: I don't think it's any different to being in here. Like other work problems, you can always still talk to each other, talk things through. I don't find it much different to if I was here.*

However, Rebecca felt there were subtle differences resulting from teleworking. For example:

*Rebecca: ...say I need to talk to someone here. Or a decision involves somebody else. I can phone and they don't answer. I don't know if they're out, or if they're at the lunch table or where they are. So that does involve calling another person. Leaving messages. It does seem to involve other people more often than if you were here. You can't physically go and see that Greg's computer is on which means he is here but he's in a meeting. If you're at home and that happens, you have to then ring Sally and Jane [the reception staff]. Interrupt them.*

Even though distance communication has become the ‘norm’ for Greg, Tania and Rebecca, all three stress the importance of the office as a meeting place and the need for

face-to-face communication. For example, Greg discussed some of the limitations of distance communication:

*Greg. There's some synergy there when people get together to bounce ideas off each other. Which you can do to some extent through the email. But it's still not as immediate. It's [email] much more technical in a sense. The questions are very much questions that require direct answers and there's no fuzzies. It still takes time. In a conversation one can bounce ideas off and mold ideas as the conversation progresses. Through the internet, you almost need to have to be in a chat room to do that. And we haven't set up a chat room where people are just sitting on the internet, sort of responding to each other...Email cuts out the guff, cuts out the extraneous things. You probably get the core bits but you don't get the richness that you get through conversation.*

### **5.2.2.3 The work relationship from the perspective of the teleworker - Tania**

Since Tania has been telecommuting the technological infrastructure within the organisation has improved which has made working from home easier. For example, the teleworkers are able to dial up and have access to shared files on the computer network. Also, the phone system has been modified so that a more seamless interface with the organisation is provided for outside customers. When I asked Tania how direct access to the system helped her to perform her work, she answered:

*Tania: To log-on and get emails. To be able to still communicate with people. So I might be doing job costing or pays or something like that and I'll come across someone who hasn't done a timesheet, or I haven't got a price on that job or I haven't got the contact details to do an invoice. So I just email people. I can log-on later in the day and finish that work rather than leave it til the next day. So you can keep working. You can do other*

*things but then you can log-on a bit later and get that information. It really helps you to keep going on your jobs.*

Having technology which enables her to maintain a continuous flow of work while she is at home is important to Tania. However, being able to perform in a telework setting is not just about having adequate technology in place. Tania also stresses the importance of having a human ‘system’ in place at home.

*Tania: I think also having a bit of a system, which my husband and I have at home. He works at night and then he comes home and sleeps while I watch the kids ‘til midday, and just get done what I can. And when he’s up from then on he’s ‘on’, until he goes to work. So you’ve just got to be able to say ‘no, I’m not on anymore’ and go and do your work.*

Given that organising the home-based workplace can involve having to organise other family members, Tania says that teleworking enables her to perform her job better: ‘I think from a work point of view I actually get more done. I actually get to concentrate more at home than what I do in here.’

Tania organises her work days to fit in with other parts of her life. For example:

*Tania: Some days if I’ve got a lot of things to do personally I’ll try and make it all on the day I’m at home, on Tuesdays. Like if I’ve got appointments. We’ve had to do house selection things or go to the bank, I’ll try and make it into that day. So I might have a shorter day there but then work on the weekend or have longer days. Which is easier to do at night because my husband goes at 9.30, and Felicity’s asleep, and I’ve just got utter peace after that, so I’m able to concentrate. I’m more of a night person. You’ll find me working late rather than coming in early.*

Tania is able to maximise the flexibility provided by telework in the way she organises her own work schedule. For example, she may do less (paid) work during the week and work on weekends, or she may not work during the day but work instead at night.

*Tania: As long as you're contactable at some point during the days when you're at home. I know that people know that I go out every day that I'm at home. They know that on Tuesday I go out. They know that I'm not there the whole day...No, no one's ever said anything. It's my day with Felicity to take her to do something. Like running her to preschool, I come in an hour late on Wednesday because I take her to school and I don't really like to rush there either. Because you work fulltime, you only get a certain amount of time to do those things. Where other mothers will hang around, they talk, they go and do stuff together after they drop their kids off, I'm off to work. So I'll stay and talk to the teachers and other mothers and take it steady and then come in. Like on Tuesday's, like I said, I try and link up other admin things in my life to do sometimes that morning. Often I'll start work at 2 o'clock and I won't finish til midnight. I suppose my output's there and people know it hasn't changed. I don't think they really care.*

Tania feels quite comfortable about the fact that she does not work a standard eight hour day. She does not feel obligated to be available during standard office hours. Likewise, she believes that her manager and work colleagues understand and accept her flexible telework arrangement.

However, it is still important for Tania to go the office for at least part of the week in order for her to attend meetings and to engage in the social aspects that the workplace provides. The social aspects of work are very important to Tania: 'I don't want to be at home all the time. I wouldn't like to not have human contact.' The 'social' is recognised as playing an important role in this workplace. For example, Tania mentioned that 'the

people' came up every year in their annual staff survey as one of the main reasons why employees like working at Research Inc. Tania believes that the face-to-face setting helps with the development and maintenance of work relationships.

*Tania: I don't know that you can actually replace everything [in virtual relationships]. Like Rebecca and I can ring each other but we'll still say 'do you want to have a coffee?' We can talk about whatever over the phone but we still get together. Exchange of ideas. Just friendship I suppose.*

As well as making the job more enjoyable, and strengthening work relationships, Tania mentioned that the face-to-face setting enables her to feel like she is involved and making a contribution to the organisation. Being physically present also facilitates the informal learning that takes place in organisations. For example:

*Tania: If I'm stuck on something in Wordperfect or Excel, it's like 'I know this package must be able to do this'. Instead of going to the manual or ringing a specialist, the software people, you can run it by someone that uses spreadsheets day in and day out and ask 'do you know how to do this?' It's solved in less than a minute.*

Trust is named by Tania as an important feature of her work relationship with Greg (see Appendix G). When asked how trust developed in their relationship, Tania says:

*Tania: I suppose ... it's just that we communicate well. Greg will say 'how's it going'. You can say how things are going. You can tell him if you're stressing out... We know each other. I suppose I'm fairly frank. So he knows that if he asks me something that I'll probably be frank about how it's going. He knows that in the line of work that I do that I'll bring things to his attention. Some expense that was way over. If there's been an order and it's come in at twice the price. You sort of know that if you go in*

*and you say nothing then he'll just sign off on it or you can actually say 'well there's a problem and this went over by a bit'. You can tell him or you can not tell him. He trusts that if there's stuff that might need mentioning that I probably would.*

Tania associates open and honest communication with the development of trust in their work relationship. The high level of trust in their work relationship has been present for many years and when asked if she felt this had changed since she commenced telecommuting Tania answered:

*Tania: No I don't think so, I think it's basically the same. It was already there before. We'd already had those sort of discussions. He'd always ask how things were going on a fairly frequent basis. I suppose he just knew that I'd say what I felt...So I think he realises that if I can't get through something I'll mention it before it becomes a problem, in general. So I guess that's developed more over the years rather than more since I've been teleworking. I don't think there's been really very much change.*

Greg provides a high degree of support to Tania in their work relationship and this has enabled Tania to continue working fulltime at Research Inc. For example, when Tania had her first child she was able to bring her into the office for the first few months after she was born. It was at this point in time when Tania formally commenced teleworking.

*Tania: I talked to Greg. He said 'I'm happy. So long as you're getting your work done and you're meeting deadlines, that's fine. Where ever you do it, it doesn't really matter.'*

When Tania started teleworking, Greg checked with her to see if she was managing her work situation adequately. Tania recalls that:

*Tania: We talked about how I was juggling it, to see whether it was working. I suppose we just sort of talked about it. And like I said, he's happy if I'm able to meet deadlines.*

When Tania found out that she was going to have twins in 1998, Greg again demonstrated a high level of trust and support. When Tania discussed her future work plans with him, he was 'just happy to leave it with me, to make the arrangements that would suit me'.

Tania recounted a conversation she had with her husband soon after finding out she was having twins:

*Tania: my husband said 'did you talk to Greg about what you might do?' and I said 'oh yeah' and he [her husband] said 'did he say if he really wants you to come back'. And I said 'he didn't say that but he seems to be making it as easy as possible for me to be able to do it'. Apart from saying here's a nanny. He's giving me someone for a month which I know isn't cheap for a non-profit organisation, to enable me to do that, so I really appreciate that.*

Greg's support is reciprocated with a high level of commitment from Tania. For example, when I spoke to her before the birth of her twins she planned to return to work in January, which is the busiest time of the year for her because that is when the company audit is completed. Tania felt that it was her responsibility to undertake the preparation required for the audit rather than leaving it for her replacement.

Tania intends to continue telecommuting over the long-term which suggests a high level of commitment to this work arrangement. When I spoke to her in July '98, she and her husband were building a house, which included a dedicated office space where Tania would be able to work. Tania says that at present telecommuting enables her to continue working full-time but even after her children are old enough to start school she would like to continue to telecommute.

*Tania: It's a more relaxed environment. Not five days a week. You'd be out of your mind if you were there [at home] all the time. But if you've created a good environment for yourself then probably it's going to be attractive. That's what I'm hoping. Things will be changing here [at work]. More people will be doing that [telecommuting] so it will probably be more the norm than the exception.*

#### **5.2.2.4 The work relationship from the perspective of the teleworker - Rebecca**

Rebecca considers technology to be the key factor in enabling her to perform her work in a telework setting. Rebecca experienced ongoing technological problems when she commenced teleworking, and this has made her aware of the importance of having an adequate technological base.

*Rebecca: I have had problems the last couple of weeks. You do realise how important it[the technology] is. You need it if you work jointly with people but you also need it for the open communication. And being accessible to people. It's an internal thing as well. Being seen that you're able to work on anything at anytime, should there be a problem. Or should you be needed on something...*

*That [external email] becomes really important when you're dealing with other people. But I have had problems with it. And we've had problems with the network here as well. And once you have got problems with that you realise. I got an email yesterday [ie Thursday] because I had to come in, that was from Wednesday morning, and something went out without a change that should've been made to it. And because I didn't get it until a day and a bit later. You see, it's such an immediate thing. People expect it and they don't phone anymore, or they just send you an email and expect you to have it within half an hour. Once you get to that level of*



*expectation I think something like emailing, it's got to be working all the time. Because if it's down for 2 days, like for me I'm away for 2 days, and this was a really good case of I wouldn't have got it until 2 days later. See, people don't expect that. They expect you to have it within the half hour or hour. Ours turns around every half hour.*

Rebecca is very conscious of the image she projects, both within the organisation and externally to customers, because she is teleworking. For example, Rebecca says:

*I think as a teleworker, you're more conscious than others of making sure you've covered all your bases as far as being accessible and not being seen to be not carrying your part of the load.*

Rebecca feels that she is productive in a telework environment.

*Rebecca: I don't think I'm working any less hard. I feel I'm doing things better. That's maybe because I'm always conscious of time and doing it, not necessarily right, the first time but trying to alleviate things. And there are less interruptions. It feels that the time at home is really quite productive.*

She also feels that teleworking has made her more independent in terms of having to work through things on her own and that has improved her overall performance.

*Rebecca: because you're not here on definite days there are days when...it does give you a bit more space to yourself and from a work point of view I think that's a good thing. Perhaps that makes you develop, you become less reliant on other people. If we're talking purely relationship, I think that's a positive thing. Which is a combination of Greg being out of the office and me not being here on certain days.*

Rebecca describes Greg's management style in the following way:

*Rebecca: I think the whole culture of the organisation, from Greg down, and I think Greg sets it, he never questions if a person's here or not here, unless seeing that something is amiss, he tries to talk to people about what they're up to. He is home in the school holidays, or his children are in here, he even bought his puppy dog in here for the first week. Greg has really set the standard. Jeff [Rebecca's previous manager] is the same, he would never say that 'Rebecca's not here today' or that 'Rebecca's gone home early', none of that happens.*

...

*Rebecca: It's definitely not wielding a stick and not looking over people's shoulders but in the same token, he knows that everyone does more than their share of hours and that everyone works fairly hard and that people are self-motivated. The people we recruit have similar ideals, underpaid and overworked ideals. And Jeff follows along with those lines as well.*

Rebecca's comment that Greg 'knows that everyone does more than their share of hours' is an important point. It stresses the fact that Greg *knows* that he can have confidence in the work output of Rebecca. Rebecca believes that this is related to the human resource strategies in place in the organisation. That is, an emphasis is placed on matching particular individual values with the overriding organisational values in the recruiting and selection process.

Like Tania, Rebecca is able to organise the way she works at home in a flexible way.

*Rebecca: the day is dragged out more. I might start doing stuff at 8 or 8.30 while I'm still having breakfast. I'll do all my reading and things like that in the morning. And then there'll be a big gap until the afternoon. And then*

*I'll start again when my husband gets home. Maybe from 6 to 8. When tea's ready I'll stop.*

...

*I'm not looking at a 7hr day on a Wednesday, if I get 5 hrs done on a Wednesday, I know that I do more than that on other days of the week. I spread the work out on other days or days I'm in here.*

Although Rebecca has a high level of flexibility in terms of organising her telework arrangement, it is interesting that there are still some areas where she has felt it necessary to be accommodating. For example, she was attending team meetings at the office once a month on her nominated telework day, even though this arrangement did not suit her.

*Rebecca: We have team meetings that are once a month and on a Thursday and I do resent that. And this week I have an interview and I should've said no, I can do it any other day but I didn't... That's the only thing, I don't like that and I should probably be stricter.*

Rebecca still feels that she needs to adjust her routine to fit in with other people because she is teleworking.

Like Tania, Rebecca also discussed the importance of being physically present at the workplace in terms of being able to successfully perform her work.

*Rebecca: [I think it's important to] nominate a particular day when everyone will be required to be here so that there is that face-to-face communication. Even though we can still keep in touch with messages and phone and e-mail, we think it's really important that everyone gets to see everybody. Sometimes you do feel like you miss out on some things sometimes if you're not here, a message goes astray. You miss the morning tea or someone's birthday or something happens here and you*

*miss out on it. You do feel a bit isolated on those days you're at home. I'll still call up and speak to someone at least a couple of times a day. I suppose it will be harder when more people start to telecommute. Tania and I see each other on Monday and then we don't see each other until Friday again. That's why we're going to nominate a day when no-one telecommutes so at least we have the chance to see everyone on that day.*

Rebecca enjoys the social aspects of work and would not like to telework on a fulltime basis. An important aspect for Rebecca of being physically present in the workplace is that it provides her with the opportunity to participate in more informal interactions with colleagues.

*Rebecca: Being part of a team [is important]. Being in an environment where you're bouncing ideas off people. I suppose you still could do that [in a telework setting] but I think seeing the people face-to-face is important. Even if it is on an irregular basis.*

I asked Rebecca 'What does seeing people face-to-face enable you to do?' and she replied:

*Rebecca: Well, it's a relationship. You have one dimension, talking to people over the phone, which is fine, to a deeper relationship with people. And I think you might lose what the organisation is about as well. You might not have that sense of who you are, or who you're working for, and the people you're working with, would not be as deep if you were never here and sharing the good times, the bad times, the things that aren't work related even. I think you'd miss all that.*

These comments highlight Rebecca's understanding that stronger relationships are forged in face-to-face settings. Rebecca's comments draw attention to the identity formation that takes place in the workplace.

Rebecca provides the following example of the way face-to-face interactions enhance everyday learning at work:

*Rebecca: It's just getting a [photo]copy in the kitchen: two people are talking about ABC calling them about a certain issue; or something that I heard on the radio and you might have been interested in this; or seeing something in a magazine and you think someone's not down to look at that magazine, they'd really like that article. Just passing people at the photocopier.*

Tania and Rebecca both feel that they miss out on the informal interaction that takes place in the office setting because they telework. This is exacerbated by the fact that when they are present in the office, they are usually so busy that there is little time for lunch and coffee breaks, where they say much of this informal interaction takes place. The time in the office becomes very 'precious' for the teleworkers as their activities on-site are fully task focussed. However, some attempt has been made to overcome the reduced access to the more informal communication with the available technology. For example, Rebecca mentioned that it is more frequent now for people to send an "all" memo<sup>12</sup> out to everyone on email. Both formal and more informal messages are communicated this way. Information from the stand-up meetings<sup>13</sup> or social announcements, such as Friday afternoon drinks, will be communicated via an "all" memo.

*Rebecca: Within this organisation, we're fairly conscious of trying to keep people in touch with each other. So I think we do try. People are just busy. Sometimes I think we let it slip a bit but I think people really try and keep that communication open.*

---

<sup>12</sup> An "all" memo generates a message that automatically goes to all employees in the organisation.

<sup>13</sup> A regular face to face meeting where research work is allocated and discussed.

This suggests a growing recognition throughout the organisation of the fact that some people are outside the face-to-face ‘loop’ and the importance of maintaining informal communication with teleworkers.

A commitment to making telework a success in the organisation has been demonstrated by the teleworkers and Greg in the formation of a telework support team at Research Inc. Tania, Rebecca, Greg and Ruth (another teleworker) have formed a telework support team. The support team aims to assist organisational members, as they commence teleworking, with issues that arise in telework settings. Rebecca describes the support group in the following way:

*Rebecca: Tania and I have already started [the support group] and we'll bring new people in as they start. We'll talk about their possible problems and we'll also e-mail all staff to get their feedback and suggestions and ask if there are any problems. We might drop out and somebody else might stay in that group. If there were problems then we could take it a step further to the manager. We thought we'd get a whole heap of information together so that people can refer to it and solve problems.*

#### **5.2.2.5 The work relationship from the perspective of the manager**

The key factor for Greg to managing in the telework setting is that both Tania and Rebecca can be considered as being self-managers. Greg does not need to be closely supervising their work and has the confidence that they will be meeting his expectations in regard to their respective performance and commitment. The following comments from Greg indicate the qualities that he expects of employees at Research Inc.

*Greg. If you get somebody in who doesn't necessarily fit in or doesn't work out, then it's quite a disruptive influence on the whole place. It can unsettle the balance. So having staff that are excited and motivated and committed to the organisation is critical...probably one of the key decisions within the organisation is trying to select the right staff in the*

*beginning. Getting people that fit into the culture. That have the approach, like what Tania and Rebecca are doing in terms of their telecommuting. Being able to be self-directed and being able to take control of the area that they're involved in and run it themselves. So if you have people that require a lot of direction, who require to be looked over and overseen every minute of the day, they don't work here. They just can't work here because that sort of management structure doesn't exist. So it would be totally inappropriate to select somebody like that with those sorts of requirements to work here. It would just throw the place into a spin, which it has done in the past.*

When I asked Greg 'how was he able to keep adequate control in a telework setting' he answered:

*Greg: I don't know whether telecommuting has anything to do with it. I don't really think it's in that traditional sense of control. You know, management control saying 'do this, that and everything else'. Particularly with Tania and Rebecca, they know their jobs and so in a sense they're managing their own area, their own business in a sense.*

Rather than relying on traditional authority-type relations, Greg oversees a work culture that emphasises support. A high level of support, for both Tania and Rebecca is evident in the following comments from Greg:

*Greg: In a way I suppose it's probably an alternative view that I see my role in the sense as actually supporting them in doing their job. Rather than them supporting me. So they've got some broad goals and objectives which everybody shares within the organisation and then Rebecca's got her components in terms of the sponsorship-marketing and Tania in terms*

*of the admin. Those things are, I wouldn't say clearly defined, but at least there's a general direction. That we have some overall goals that we're trying to achieve. But from then on, I see my case as a supporting role. If Rebecca wants me to provide assistance with the sponsorship program in terms of going to see people, talking to people or being part of that. Tania might have assistance in terms of resources to purchase a new asset package management system or upgrading the Attaché system. She'd come to me to say 'oh well, is it Ok to invest this money to get this?' So in a sense I'm supporting her by saying 'yep, we'll put money into those areas.' So that's how I see my role. And not only for Tania and Rebecca but for all the other research staff as well. So long as we all know where we're going then my role should be one of supporting everybody else within the organisation.*

At one of the group interviews with Greg, Tania and Rebecca, they compiled a list of features in their work relationship that enabled them to perform their job more effectively (see Appendix G). All three considered trust to be an important aspect of their work relationship, in relation to performing effectively, and Greg considered trust be the most important aspect of his work relationship with both Tania and Rebecca. Greg described trust in the following way:

*Greg. It's about being able to trust the individual and they know the right thing to do. Whatever it is that they're doing, whether it's handling cash or fixing up timesheets or doing anything on behalf of the organisation. I suppose that I'm trusting that they [Tania and Rebecca] will do the right thing... In any of those things there's a great degree of leeway. It's a bit like any of us if we work from home, the opportunity is there for people to go off and lie on the beach. It's really about trusting people that they've*



*got the organisation and therefore their own interests at heart. If people aren't meeting their commitments...I tried to operate the organisation in that people feel that if they're hurting the organisation they're hurting themselves. In a lot of big bureaucracies it's like 'I'm such a small part that what I do won't really make a difference'. But what I've tried to build here is that there's a lot of ownership within the organisation so that people know what's going on and they also know that they're an important part of it. So if they're not pulling their weight then it's affecting them and it's affecting everybody.*

Greg is able to trust that organisational members are performing, or 'do[ing] the right thing', because he believes they are committed to the organisation. Greg has tried to create high commitment by getting organisational members to feel responsible for the success of the organisation.

*Greg. Say with telephone bills, if there were a lot of international calls.*

*Tania might say, 'there were a bunch of international calls, do you know about those?' If I don't then I'll find out who was doing it, if it was for a project, that sort of stuff. It's probably that sort of thing. I guess **I trust that Tania is thinking like me** and that she'll know. [my emphasis]*

Greg knows that organisational members will 'do the right thing' because he considers that there is alignment between individual and organisational goals.

#### **5.2.2.6 Summary**

The following sections summarise the work relationship between Tania (the teleworker) and Greg (the manager) and Rebecca (the teleworker) and Greg. The first section focuses on Tania's perspective, the second section on Rebecca's perspective, and the final section on Greg's perspective in relation to his work relationship with both Rebecca and Tania. Greg felt that there was little difference between his work relationship with Rebecca and

his work relationship with Tania, and the summary of his comments applies to both Rebecca and Tania.

#### *5.2.2.6.1 Tania and Greg*

Tania is the financial administrator of the organisation and Greg is the CEO. Tania and Greg have regular contact with each other, often on a daily basis. Their contact is usually in relation to seeking information from each other in order for them to continue their work. This contact might take place in the co-located setting or the telework setting.

Trust is emphasised by both Tania and Greg as an important aspect of their work relationship. Trust is important for Tania as it enables her to be open about problems that might arise in her work. See section 5.2.2.6.3 below for Greg's views on why trust is important in the work relationship.

Tania's emphasis in the interviews was on the way she has organised her telework setting so that it fits in with her family life. When she is teleworking she might dedicate the daytime to her family and then work in the evenings or on the weekends. Tania's understanding of her work relationship with Greg is that as long as she meets her deadlines she can work when and where she chooses. This flexible arrangement is endorsed by Greg and appears to have the support of her other work colleagues. Tania emphasised the importance of the support that Greg provides in their work relationship. This support includes providing Tania with the flexibility that enables her to continue to work on a fulltime basis. However, even though there is great flexibility in the way Tania organises her work arrangement, she still attends the office on a regular basis as this enables her to maintain her work relationships with her colleagues. Tania enjoys teleworking and wants to continue to telework after her children commence school.

#### *5.2.2.6.2 Rebecca and Greg*

Rebecca, the marketing co-ordinator, and Greg also need to interact regularly in order to get their work done. Rebecca feels that there have been changes in her work relationship with Greg since she commenced teleworking. Rebecca says that telework has provided the space for a more independent work relationship with her manager.

Rebecca's focus in the interviews was on the technology and the importance of getting this worked out in order to be able to perform successfully in the telework setting.

Rebecca stressed the importance of being seen to be performing adequately in the telework setting and was very conscious of the image she was projecting to her work colleagues and her manager.

Rebecca organises her telework setting in a flexible way so that it fits with her requirements as a parent. This means stretching the telework day out into the evening or working longer hours on other days when she is in the office. Although there is flexibility in the way she can organise her telework setting, at times Rebecca still felt compelled to reorganise her telework arrangement so that it fitted with events at work. Rebecca enjoys teleworking but only ever intends to telework on a part-time basis. She still attends the office on a regular basis and draws attention to the importance of the office in terms of her everyday learning and her identity as an organisational member.

#### *5.2.2.6.3 Greg, Rebecca and Tania*

Greg placed a lot of emphasis on ‘commitment’ and ‘trust’ in the interviews. Greg connected trust with commitment and said that he had great trust in both Tania and Rebecca as they are committed to the organisation. Greg also stressed the importance of support. He considers that his role in the organisation is to provide support to organisational members so that they are able to perform their work.

Greg considers that traditional authority relations based on hierarchy are inappropriate in this organisation. He does not feel that it is necessary to supervise either Tania or Rebecca. He refers to each of the teleworkers as ‘running their own show’. They both demonstrate the self-directed behaviours that Greg considers critical for this workplace. These behaviours include being: motivated, excited and committed.

### **5.2.3 *Peter and Cath***

#### **5.2.3.1 Background information**

Peter and Cath work in the Information Systems Group at NRG. Peter is an IT analyst and his work involves setting up new systems, evaluating products and product selection. This work is conducted in a team based setting. Teams are formed to work on specific projects, with project duration ranging from 3 months to two years or longer. The team structure includes a project manager and project leader.

Cath is a project leader in the Information Systems Group. Her job involves all the planning and managing of projects from the initial systems requirements phase right through to the implementation. Cath and Peter commenced working together on the current project in March 1998. Cath is the project leader and Peter is a member of the project team. They have worked together on other projects in the past.

Both Peter and Cath telework. Peter works full-time. He works at home 2 days per week, Monday and Thursday, and attends the office on Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday. When I first interviewed Peter in July 1998, he had been teleworking for nearly two and a half years. He commenced teleworking so that he could spend more time with his children as they were growing up, and to assist his wife so that she could re-enter the workforce. He has worked at NRG for twenty years. The degree of flexibility with Peter's telework arrangement is bound by the organisation's Work and Family Policy which stipulates that teleworkers are able to work from home a maximum of two days per week and must work within the core hours of 9am to 4pm.

Cath works part-time—three days a week in the office on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, and at home on a Thursday. Cath and Peter are both in the office on Tuesday and Wednesday. I commenced interviews with Cath in July 1998. She had then been teleworking for about a year and a half. She has worked at NRG for about ten and a half years.

#### **5.2.3.2 Descriptions of the interaction between Peter and Cath**

Most of the interaction between Cath and Peter takes place at the office in a face-to-face situation.

*Peter. We very rarely communicate when we're working from home. Even with emails. It's very rare that we need to.*

The office is important as a venue for both formal and informal interactions.

*Cath: The office is very important. I know that I couldn't do this job, at home, all the time. Even if it was logistically possible. I wouldn't want to do it because the social side of it is to me important. Even though there is limited time for personal things. There is still time and there still is interaction with people on a professional level as well as a personal level. So the office is a very important nucleus of everything that's going on.*

The work that is done at home (both by Cath and Peter) is chosen intentionally so that it can be done with little or no interaction with other team members.

*Cath. We normally have such a set-up that we do everything that we need to in terms of communication while we're in the office so we need minimal communication when we're outside. Just in case we can't get to each other for some reason, like a machine problem or something like that or we can't get a hold of resources that we would have access to in the office. So we tend to work that way. Other people might work differently.*

However, some interactive tasks are undertaken at a distance, for example:

*Cath. It's quite often we can walk through things on the phone. Two people will be on the phone looking at the same thing on the screen or visualising what the other person is talking about. Generally you can find that you can work through it. Again, it's communication and depending on how urgent things are.*

Most of their interactions at the office are very task focused because of time limitations.

Peter. *We do have our little moments when we take 5 minutes out to have a chat. But you get to work and focus on what you've got to do basically and do it. Because you know that you're going to be away from the office 2 or 3 days a week. You need to get done in the office what you need to get done in the office so that you can concentrate on the other things when you're not there.*

This is reiterated by Cath who says that:

Cath: *...it is important that we can come together and communicate effectively because we have such limited time together because we're all here for a limited period and within that period we've got a lot to achieve. So, if we were here 5 days a week we'd have more time for the work relationship thing and also the personal thing. We'd have time for a coffee and a bit of a chitchat about what goes on outside, blah, blah, blah. I'm afraid that is limited because our focus has to be on what we have to get done in the time we're here. So that leaves less time for the more personal aspects.*

Email is the main communication medium used by Peter and Cath when they are teleworking. However, their choice of medium often depends on the type of information required and the urgency of the message. For example:

Cath. *It depends on what sort of information you want. If you need that frequent interaction, and if it's urgent [telephone is used]. For non-urgent things I tend to send an e-mail off to Peter and just let him get back to me when it suits his schedule so that I don't interrupt him as well as everything else. If it's urgent then I'll pick up the phone and say 'please can you help me with this'.*

### 5.2.3.3 The work relationship from the perspective of the manager

Cath is very conscious of the medium she chooses when she interacts with Peter. She finds that email is not very personal and has limitations, particularly in terms of making requests. Cath is concerned with how messages may be perceived, particularly when communicated via email. She does not want Peter and the other team members to feel as if she is sending orders.

*Cath. I worry not so much from my point of view but from your point of view [Peter]. Like if my manager was just constantly sending an order to me, I might think, is that really the right way to do that? But sometimes when you're in the hurry and the flurry of the project you just get done what you need to get done. And you need to get it done as quickly as possible and sometimes you don't pay as much attention to people's personal needs as much as work needs. That's the point, e-mail attends to your work needs, not so much your personal.*

Cath considers the regular weekly face-to-face meetings that she has with the project team to be an important aspect of managing the team. The meetings help Cath to manage the progress of the project. The office is like the central hub where the team interaction takes place, then for the rest of the week, team members tend to work more independently on their respective team tasks.

*Cath. The most important thing from our point of view is to meet and discuss things together when we're in the office. We do that on a weekly basis, regardless of what else is going on. And also to keep in touch with anything that changes via e-mail, or telephone. We still do phone each other at the office. And planning is a real must, to make sure that everyone is planned for the week coming up. So from one Tuesday to the next, everyone knows what their task is for the week. If there's any problems, they need to be raised so we can address those before everyone goes their*

*own way. And if there were any emergencies then people can pick up the telephone if there's no one in the office that can solve it, or send an email and we'll respond as quickly as possible. So management isn't difficult as long as everything is planned. There are some occasions when you've really got to get on the phone and sort things out. Telephone or face-to-face...e-mail becomes a bit cumbersome because you need to respond quickly ... It's been fine, as long as everything is planned and everyone knows what to do, then things don't come unstuck. I think communication when we're together is a must, and continuing and backing it up with telephones and emails keeps that moving.*

One reason for Cath preferring face-to-face communication is because she finds it more efficient. For example:

*Cath. Yes, it [an idea] comes into your head and you go 'what do you think about that blah, blah, blah'. Where maybe if you were at home you'd think about it and you might just push yourself to make a decision and act without consultation. Or if it was really important or you were stuck you would send a message. But it's much more efficient and a lot faster to be able to just lean over and say 'what shall I do about this?' or 'I think we should do that' or someone might pipe in 'what about such and such'. So you get all that interaction. And you end up with an end result that everyone agrees on and that everyone has had input to. And everybody's aware of. I think that's the important thing, that everybody is aware of what's going on so that helps them to decide again in the future so 'we did this last time, why don't we do it like that again 'cause it worked.'*



*Whereas if they're not party to what's happening in certain areas of the project they don't have that experience to use as a basis later on.*

Not only does Cath think that the face-to-face setting provides the opportunity for increased participation and consensus building, but it also provides an opportunity where informal learning can occur. In other words, the process of being involved in the decision-making of the group enables the group members to learn from this shared experience.

Another concern of Cath is that email is very impersonal.

*Cath: I guess my concern is the personalness of emails, in that it's nice to say to someone 'would you mind just doing such and such, you really need it in a hurry', kind of thing whereas if you do it in an e-mail no matter how you turn the words around, it doesn't sound as nice and as personal as you would like it to be. Sometimes you can't get across your personal feelings via e-mail. And that applies in several cases. If you want to speak to someone about something, if I wanted to speak to Peter in a bit more detail than formally in an email, you tend to write differently to the way you speak to someone. I find that a disadvantage. Sometimes I do get concerned.*

Since email fails to provide the same depth of information that is gained in face-to-face interactions, this has implications for Cath in terms of giving and receiving feedback.

*Cath: you pick up how they're feeling, how they're going with stuff when you talk to them face-to-face which you can't get via e-mail. It's words and there's nothing in between the lines, so to speak. So if you have concerns or you might just think 'gee, I want to spend a bit more time knowing how they're feeling about doing all this'. But you don't always*

*get the chance to do that. It goes through your mind sometimes when you're sending e-mail.*

I asked Cath if she thought it would be possible to manage a project team who were operating as a virtual team (that is, a group who only communicate at a distance and do not have face-to-face interaction) and she said:

*Cath. I think that would depend on the people, it would depend on the work that was being done. I think you could probably screech through it but if people didn't meet together to discuss things and toss ideas around in a group situation then you would struggle to progress at a reasonable speed and I think you'd start to slow down to a point where you brought everyone back together again and put everything back on the right track and added some vigour back into the project. I think on a short term basis it's manageable, on a long term basis I wouldn't like to work under those conditions.*

Her comment about the possibility of a project slowing down reflects once again the link that Cath makes between efficiency and face-to-face communication. Efficient communication is important to Cath.

*Cath: We need to be able to sit down and communicate effectively, and relatively quickly. Speed is a thing as well. We can't afford to spend 3 hours sitting discussing a small topic. We need to get what we need done in the first hour of the first day we're together so we can go away and do all of that stuff.*

...

*C. Tasks, timeframes, responsibilities, all those sorts of things [need to be clear]. Like, 'I didn't realise we needed this for today, I thought it was next*

*week' or 'I wasn't sure about the priority so I've done this first'. All the little things that can slow things down. You need to know exactly what you've got to do, in what order and what timeframe you've got on that. That needs to be very clear*

Cath considers that informal interactions contribute to being able to manage more easily.

*Cath: I think that it [an informal relationship] enhances the work relationship because if you have that relationship with them when it comes to work, it makes working through things a lot easier. People are more willing to pass on information or spend a bit of time to sort some things out.*

Cath thinks that informal interactions enhance the work relationship, and that this in turn impacts on work performance. For example, Cath feels that people are less likely to collaborate if the work relationship has not been adequately developed.

*Cath: there are times when you have to ask someone to do something you either don't want to do, that you don't know how to do or it's a hassle or time wise it's a problem. But if you've got that rapport it's easier to get that work done than if you don't have that rapport. There's more flexibility and cooperation because you feel like that's a friend. So you want to do that for them. It's not 'I'm not going to do that for my boss because they don't bother to do such and such'. So the personal side is very important for the rapport which is important to get the work done.*

Cath considers that work relationships take time to develop.

*Cath: I think that [the work relationship] improves with time, as you get to know people as you've worked together you get to understand people's*

*character. How they work, what their capabilities are, that sort of informal thing increases. The longer the project, the more chance you have of getting something positive from that side of things.*

Cath thinks that the more informal aspects of their work relationship are more difficult to maintain in a telework setting. When I asked Cath ‘What aspects of your work relationship with Peter are the most difficult to maintain because he is teleworking?’ she said:

*Cath: Probably the more personal side of the relationship. Telephone conversations and email messages are adequate to communicate facts and information but are never as personal as face-to-face conversation and interaction.*

Another important factor that enables Cath to manage in a telework setting is having the confidence that mutual expectations in regard to performance will be met.

*Cath. Again, because we get to see each other for a relatively limited period. We need to know that if we say we’re going to do this, and then you go away, and that the next time we meet it gets done. And we know that if I went away and didn’t do something that I’d let Peter down and vice versa. You need to know. Our relationship and our work wouldn’t work that way [ie teleworking] if we didn’t come back and things weren’t done which we’d discussed and we’d promised.*

An example of the way mutual expectations are met is in terms of availability. Peter is more available because he is teleworking and Cath says this makes him easier to contact than some office-based workers:

*Cath: In terms of availability, I know that I can always get a message to Peter and I always get a response, regardless of where we are or what*

*we're doing. Sometimes in the office, even if you're in the office, you're in and out, you're at meetings, you don't always get a response as quickly as you do when people are at home, they tend to respond very quickly. So availability, and getting information and a response is never a problem.*

Cath's comments implicitly suggest that Peter is easier to manage because he is easier to contact. The fact that Cath knows that Peter will always be at home on certain days suggests that little flexibility has been introduced into Peter's telework arrangement.

Cath considers trust to be an important aspect of her work relationship with Peter. When I asked Cath in an email interview: 'How is trust developed and maintained in your work relationship with Peter?' she replied:

Cath: Peter has earned trust over the time he has worked with me by consistently producing the results required of him in his work. Trust will continue to be maintained whilst Peter continues to do this. Specific examples would be:

- completion of work tasks as required
- completion of work tasks earlier or better than expected
- putting effort into a task which is over and above that which was expected
- displaying commitment to making the project succeed by doing whatever is required to make that happen
- loyalty to team members in work related matters

Peter has done all of these things [end of email]

This emphasises the importance of meeting expectations in regard to performance for the development of trust.

#### 5.2.3.4 The work relationship from the perspective of the teleworker

Peter describes the way he organises his work day when he is teleworking in the following way:

*Peter: The only thing that was stipulated was that I had to do 7 hours in the day mostly around the core time which is 9 'til 4. I start early 7.30 or so and if I have an extra break in my work I can extend my day to a reasonable time without having to go into a late night. I found that once I got into a pattern, as I say my daughter was in a fairly regular pattern at that stage, I suppose she still is, it was OK. I got into that pattern of work.*

Peter says that 'good communication' is the most important factor influencing his ability to perform successfully in a telework setting.

*Peter. This aspect [communication] is probably the most important whether I am in the office or telecommuting. Without it I cannot contribute fully to the progression of the project. I need to be able to solve problems that may eventuate or even acquire work should the need arise.*

Peter considers that being able to be open and honest in his communication with Cath enables him to perform effectively in the telework setting.

*Peter: [being] able to tell Cath about any problems that may arise, whether personal or directly project related, and know that she will keep them confidential should the need arise.*

Peter considers that face-to-face communication is an important factor in enabling him to perform in a telework setting. Being physically present at work and meeting and talking with colleagues makes Peter feel more a part of the organisation. For example, before starting to work from home, Peter thought that in the future everyone would be teleworking. However, his views have changed since experiencing telework first hand.

*Peter. I can't see that [everyone teleworking] happening now. After experiencing working from home, I don't think I could do it fulltime. It would be too isolating.*

Peter finds that the telework setting can be frustrating at times and it is not as easy to get the quick answers that you can in the office setting.

*Peter: Sometimes I wish to know something and I've got to go through the process of writing an email or making a phone call or something, rather than just talking across the desk to someone. Things like that I find frustrating. The fact that you can't sit there and work and turn around and get some answers, I find, I guess frustrating is the word.*

When I asked Peter 'What aspects of your work relationship with Cath are the most difficult to maintain in a teleworking setting?' he answered:

*Peter: I find communicating on a personal level more difficult, even though it can be done via e-mail or phone. This not only applies to my relationship with Cath, but also the rest of the project team as well.*

Peter and Cath say that their work relationship developed over a period of time, while they were working on the current project. Even though they had worked together in the past, their work relationship needed to be re-established.

*Peter: I've worked with Cath before, some years back, and to be honest, it cools and you have to build it up again. You lose that communication. You only see her to say hello in the corridors or whatever.*

It appears that much of the relationship development between Peter and Cath has taken place in a face-to-face setting. When I asked how they developed their work relationship while teleworking, Peter said:

*Peter: I don't know that telecommuting would have a great deal of impact on that because we're still in the office and we're still communicating.*

*Kerry. So you feel that the time that you're in the office you can attend to the relationship building activities?*

*Peter. Well, that refers back to what we were talking about earlier where we have to fit everything into those couple of days [when we're in the office].*

One reason for the work relationship developing predominantly in the office setting is that Peter finds social interactions easier to conduct in a face-to-face setting.

*Peter: You can have that social interaction [at a distance] but it's not as strong. It's harder to do, much harder to do over the phone. I can talk to people over the phone and get on well with them but you can't really cement strong relationships unless you have face-to-face.*

Peter stressed the importance of the link between informal communication and performance.

*Peter. Yes, for instance I came into work and had a 5 minute chat with Cath about ... what we did on the weekend. It just sort of relaxes you for the day. People might see it as being not work related but I see it as being part of the social fabric of the organisation and assisting in productivity. If you're at home you don't get that. You can do it by email. I converse this way with an old team member but it's not quite the same as face-to-face. I think it's important to have that contact.*

The informal aspects of their work relationship enable common interests to be established.



*Peter. When we are able to talk about things outside here, we're able to talk about things like we both have a child of similar age. So we have a common ground that we can talk around as well. Some common interests.*

Peter believes that face-to-face settings are important because this is where the informal aspects of the work relationship take place and this enables the discovery of common interests. However, this does not mean that social relationships can only be developed in face-to-face settings. For example, Peter discussed the way he interacts at a distance with a work colleague:

*Peter. I sometimes ring up and talk to Matthew because I get on well with Matthew and we have a bit of yarn about how he's doing and stuff, we come from a similar background. I sometimes do that when I'm working from home. I might spend 5 or 10 minutes just chatting to him before we get into work. So you can still get the social contact whether you're in or not.*

Peter associates the development of trust in his work relationship with Cath with his performance in the telework setting. When I asked Peter how trust developed in his work relationship, he answered:

*Peter: By what I do here in the office generally and by my results from working at home over time.*

Trust is an important feature of the work relationship for Peter because it enables him to be more open in the way he interacts with Cath.

*Peter: I think that [informality] comes out of trust, as it keeps building and building. You're dropping your barriers more and more as time goes on.*

#### **5.2.3.5 Summary**

Peter (the teleworker) and Cath (the manager) interact on the 'typical' types of things that you would expect a project leader and a team member to be working on, for example,

providing regular updates to each other, seeking clarification, allocating tasks, and sharing information. It is important to note that this interaction takes place within the co-located setting. Peter and Cath have little interaction in the telework setting.

Cath is very conscious of intruding in Peter's telework space. This is evident in her hesitancy to communicate with Peter in the telework setting. However, when Peter is in the co-located work setting, the way he and Cath interact is quite different. There is no hesitation by Cath in regard to gathering and disseminating information from/to Peter in the co-located setting. Cath considers the office to be an important nucleus for managing and this is where Cath manages the workgroup. Cath placed great emphasis on teamwork. The type of work performance that Cath considers important includes displaying a collaborative attitude, commitment to the project, and loyalty to the team. Cath feels that Peter has demonstrated all these qualities in his work performance.

Cath and Peter both referred to the importance of trust in their work relationship. Both connected the establishment of trust in their work relationship with the successful performance of work tasks by Peter. Cath and Peter also drew attention to the importance of informal relations in terms of work performance. Both felt that more informal relations improved their work relationship and work performance. These more informal relations take place in the co-located setting. However, both acknowledged that there is little time for these more informal interactions, or what they call 'chit chat', in the office. Their interactions in the office are very task-focused.

Peter mentioned that his telework arrangement is bounded by the organisation's requirement of only teleworking a maximum of two days per week, and working within core hours each day. However, there is still some flexibility in the way he has organised his telework setting. Peter works more flexible hours when he is teleworking which enables him to include extra-work activities, such as looking after his young daughter, into his work schedule. Peter finds working at home isolating and frustrating at times.

## 5.2.4 Anne, Leanne and Jennifer

### 5.2.4.1 Background information

Leanne and Jennifer both work in the same department at Infocheck and both perform in the same role. They are employed part-time as Product and Testing Analysts in the IT department, their primary role being to provide a consultancy service to other departments in the organisation. For example, if there is an idea for a new project, or if there is a problem with the system that needs to be changed, Leanne and Jennifer perform a risk assessment of the project or proposed change. They use their knowledge of business specifications and logical specifications to provide a consultancy role throughout the project development. They moved into this internal consultancy role approximately 18 months ago. They also provide consultancy to the Help Desk and test various IT systems.

Both Leanne and Jennifer have worked at Infocheck for 18 years. They started on almost the same day and they have known each other since that time. Leanne commenced home-based work nine years ago and Jennifer started a year later. Both commenced home-based work in order to combine work and parenting responsibilities. Both Leanne and Jennifer have a long commute to work. It takes Jennifer well over two hours to get to the office and Leanne over one hour, and neither wanted a long commute to work in view of their increased responsibility of parenting.

Both work from home approximately six hours each day, four days of the week. They have organised that they each take a different day off so there is not a break in the consultancy service that they provide. Either Leanne or Jennifer is available any day of the normal work week. There is some flexibility with the hours worked, that is, they do not have to work fixed hours. This sometimes benefits the teleworkers. For example, Leanne mentioned that she has been able to attend events at her children's school during the day because she teleworks. More often though, Leanne and Jennifer need to be flexible and work longer days in order to be able to meet work deadlines.

*Leanne: I aim between 20 and 25 hours [a week] – sometimes we've had to go 30, then sometimes it's been a little bit more (laughs). But it's not often. That's never a drama because you know when you've got to get something finished you just get on at night. Because, we can work, if we*

*wanted to, which we have haven't we, worked through the nights... Yes, we can do it at anytime that suits us if we do need to get something done.*

Anne is the IT Implementation Manager, and manages both Leanne and Jennifer. Anne commenced employment with Infocheck in October 1999. The IT section of the organisation had been restructured just prior to Anne commencing; and Anne was brought in specifically to develop and manage the newly formed implementation group. There are eleven people altogether in the group that Anne manages.

When Anne started there were five home-based workers. Three have since left and Leanne and Jennifer are now the only people in the group doing home-based work. Anne had had prior experience in remote management before starting at Infocheck. In a previous position she managed staff that were based in Hong Kong. She had face-to-face contact with these employees about once every 3 months, when they either travelled to Sydney or she travelled to Hong Kong.

Only group interviews were conducted with Anne, Jennifer and Leanne, making it difficult to pull apart the interview material for analysis as separate teleworker – manager sets without losing the context. For example, one teleworker may have responded to a question and the other may have nodded in agreement, or both teleworkers may have responded to a question and their dialogue is interrelated. Therefore, the interview material is analysed from the perspective of both the teleworkers in the same section (see 5.2.4.3 below).

#### **5.2.4.2 Descriptions of the interaction between Anne, Leanne and Jennifer**

Leanne and Jennifer do all of their work from home, rather than attending the office for part of the working week. The telephone and the internal email system, called Groupwise, are used for distance communications. Leanne, Jennifer and Anne do not have frequent contact. For example, Leanne says: 'we have a meeting every fortnight now, and we might not speak to Anne until the next fortnight on the Friday'. The meetings that Leanne refers to are team meetings with the rest of the group. Anne established the procedure of involving the home-based workers in these team meetings. Prior to Anne's commencement as manager, the home-based workers only received the minutes from these meetings.

The team meetings are held via teleconferencing <sup>14</sup> every fortnight. Both Leanne and Jennifer are also involved in additional teleconference meetings for specific consultancy projects. Although being included in the team meetings via the teleconference has made a vast improvement in terms of overall communication say the teleworkers, there are still perceived limitations associated with this form of technology. For example, team meetings are increasingly requiring a real-time interactive process during which team members draught code. Anne describes it in the following way:

*It's like draughting psuedo-code effectively. They're sitting with everybody around saying 'what does this need to do?' and they're [team members based in the office] writing up a psuedo-code on the whiteboard.*

This creates difficulties for Leanne and Jennifer who, as they attend the meetings via teleconference, are unable to see what is being written on the whiteboard.

*Leanne: It's a bit hard to speak up sometimes when you just can't see what they're doing. You might say something that they've already got up there or/*

*Jennifer: And you feel a bit silly sometimes.*

*Leanne: And as you can imagine, because they are writing things on the board, everyone's shooting ideas and sometimes they might all talk at once.*

...

*Jennifer: And a lot of them have probably never been on the other end of a phone and understood what it's like when everyone talks at once. I never used to say anything but now I say, 'hang-on, can you not all talk at once'. I have to because you can't hear.*

---

<sup>14</sup> Teleconferencing involves connecting a number of people in different locations by telephone.

As well as incorporating the teleworkers by teleconference in the fortnightly team meetings, Anne has introduced a monthly face-to-face meeting with the employees in her group. Leanne and Jennifer consider that this has made a considerable difference to the development of their relationships with Anne and other colleagues. A description of the monthly meetings prepared by Leanne, Jennifer and Anne gives an indication of the general format of the meetings and the types of interactions between group members including: brainstorming, problem solving, idea generation, information exchange and feedback (see Appendix F). The meetings provide Leanne and Jennifer with the opportunity for developing more informal relationships with group members and other members of the organisation.

When Anne commenced working at Infocheck she adjusted the level and type of interaction that the employees in that section were used to.

*Anne: When I first arrived that was the other thing that I found really strange was there was a team meeting each week. But the manager didn't go to it. And neither did anybody from home. The objective of the team meeting from the team here was to get it over and done with as quickly as possible. I saw the minutes one week and it was like, 'yippee, we've done it in five minutes'. And I've gone 'what's the point of having a team meeting. So then we said let's get the girls at home and when we had five of them we had to ring around and get Telstra to do the conference call for us and we'd get them to come in on the call. That did cause a little bit of agro for a couple of people in-house because it's like, 'damn, now the meeting actually goes for the best part of an hour, and we've got better things to do'.*

Another characteristic of the interactions that Leanne and Jennifer have with Anne, and other colleagues, is that they tend to be task-related, rather than informal.

*Jennifer: We don't socialise with anyone in the organisation, and that's terrible. It's just how things have developed. I used to. When I didn't have kids and stuff. But once you've got your kids, you're busy. Like Lee, we're friends with Lee, but 3 or 4 months will go by where we won't even [see her], I mean, we see her more now that's she's in our department. Once a month. It's sad.*

*Kerry: It seems that you're managing without that.*

*Leanne: Yeah. We're not ones, if I ring someone in here, I want my answer and I want to get back to it.*

*Jennifer: I mean, I say 'hi, how are you going? What are you up to?' or whatever. You want to try and build a relationship.*

*Leanne: But when you work part-time too, you've got to get in there, do it. Get your work done.*

*Jennifer: We're only working 6 hours a day. Lately we've been working 9 hours. You've got that much work that you want to do in that time that you really haven't got the time to be you know. I find that I try to build up [a relationship], when I'm assigned to a project as a consultant, when I'm working with the implementation officer, reviewing their test plans and stuff. I've found that over the last three months, as I've worked with different implementation officers, you tend to start getting a rapport with them. I notice they ring me a lot more. Which is great because that's what we want. That's our goal. And you do sort of start saying 'oh how was your weekend' or something. Just as an initial thing, 'oh very good, how was yours?' and then you get on with it. We don't gossip about the office.*

*... but do you really miss the grapevine? When it boils down to it, it's only gossip anyway, isn't it?*

Even though the emphasis is on task-related interactions with Anne and other colleagues when operating at a distance, Jennifer has recognised a relationship between establishing more informal relations and the level of contact that she has with colleagues. However she is quick to point out that this does not include 'office gossip', which she dismisses as being unimportant.

#### **5.2.4.3 The work relationship from the perspective of the teleworkers**

The teleworkers are aware of the importance of their work relationships with Anne and other organisational members.

*Jennifer. I think the main thing is trying to build a relationship. Especially when we've had new people within our department that have never worked with us side by side, and then we go home to work, they've started and we've been homeworkers. So we've never had that one on one where you sit next to each other and work. To try to build that relationship, I can see now, as I've been working with other implementation officers on projects that their confidence level in me has gone higher. Not that it was low, but they'd never worked with me. But now I've worked with Katrina and Crystal. I've worked with them closely. And it's been over the phone or I've had to review their test plans and give them comments. Or work, when they're in the meetings and I'm on the phone, and they can hear the comments, discussions and that. I can see over the last 6 months that I'm starting to build relationships with them. Which is good because we're supposed to be here for support. Anne has tried to encourage the other implementation officers, if they've got a question with what they're doing*



*or with the system that they should ring us up. And I'm finding now that they are.*

These comments highlight the importance of work relationships in enabling Leanne and Jennifer to perform in the telework setting. While the teleworkers feel that the lack of interruption from colleagues enables them to perform specific work tasks more effectively, for example:

*Leanne: There's not as many interruptions that I'm sure that you would get in here. I know Anne gets a lot when she tries to do her work. But we can go for days and not speak to anybody. Just sit there and do our work ... I can just concentrate*

the hesitancy of organisational members to contact the teleworkers has negative implications for them in terms of performing in their relatively new roles as internal consultants.

*Leanne. You know, we've got the knowledge, so we're always saying 'just ring us, just ring us'. But they might just hesitate that little bit because we're not there. In fact there was a comment from someone this morning.*

*Jennifer. Margaret. Cause Margaret's leaving, one of the other girls, she's been here a long time and people have made comments to her, 'we're going to lose your knowledge' and she said 'why don't you ring Jennifer and Leanne. They know everything about what we've [been doing].'*

*Leanne. Whether there's that hesitation to ring us I don't know.*

*Jennifer. It's like sometimes Anne has to advertise us, in a sense. Anne will tell people 'I've got the girls at home. Ring them up.' It's like putting an ad out for us.*

Leanne and Jennifer do not interact frequently with Anne in order to do their job. Leanne and Jennifer usually do their own problem-solving and decision making, either individually, or with each other. For example, Jennifer says:

*Jennifer: Ok, well if it's a problem that comes up with the actual task that we're doing, I would say that 99% of the time that Leanne and I would sort it out ourselves. We wouldn't involve Anne. But if we needed some sort of direction or something, we would probably shoot Anne off a memo or stick our finger in the phone. We try not to waste Anne's time. Basically, we're pretty self-sufficient. Anne knows that if we're going to go to her it's going to be for something that we need her input on or we need Anne to escalate something for us.*

Both Leanne and Jennifer think that it is important to be independent and to be able to solve problems on their own, rather than constantly referring to Anne.

*Jennifer. But I think what we've done with our set-up, ...us working things out for ourselves, could only be a benefit. If we needed to ring Anne every five minutes, we should be here [in the office].*

When I asked them if it was important that Anne viewed them as being self-sufficient they said:

*Leanne: We've always had to be. There's been no buts about it. When you work from home you really have to be that sort of person.*

*Jennifer: Very self-motivating, very/*

*Leanne: You can't be ringing someone every five minutes. You may as well be in here.*

*Jennifer: Anne knows that if she gives either of us a task that she doesn't have to follow up the next day and say 'now are you going to do that?'*

While the emphasis is on being self-sufficient, Leanne and Jennifer also seem to have established that there are times when they do need to interact with Anne. For example, Jennifer says:

*Jennifer: If there's any problems, Anne **knows** that we'll come to her. [my emphasis]*

Leanne and Jennifer both recognise the importance of meeting Anne's expectations and make every effort to ensure that they do.

*Jennifer. Anne knows if we specify a time and then we think, there's problems and we think we're not going to meet that deadline, I've contacted Anne and asked to pull Leanne in or vice versa. Just so Anne is not going to get any surprises at the end when the deadline's not met. And that's important, you know.*

While talking about the importance of work relationships in relation to being able to perform in the telework setting, Jennifer mentioned the importance of feedback. Jennifer made the following comment in relation to her interactions with fellow project team members:

*Jennifer. it's one thing just getting dished out all this work all the time and another thing thinking that people actually appreciate the efforts that you're putting in. It's just one thing, because we are remote, it's easy for people to say 'oh I need you to do this change, this change, I need you to work on this project, I need you to do this, this, this' and you never hear. Cause the only time you're hearing is all the work. And it's nice to hear the actual result. And that's why also, the other thing is, when we work on*

*major projects, it's always good to see, to find some feedback, on how the new service – are members using the new service? What do they think of the new service? Because if you do all this work on it, and then you hear nothing. And that has happened in the past. I've worked on a lot of stuff. You put all your effort into getting a service right and then nobody tells you anything.*

Another important aspect of performing in a telework setting for the teleworkers is having a contact person in the office that can follow-up their issues and concerns. They view Anne as successfully performing this role.

*Jennifer: you've still got to have someone there. If we're running a project and there is a problem, I've only got to do one phone call to Anne and I know she'll take it on board. You need someone that can listen to the testers or the implementation officers and they can really listen and say 'I understand your point of view' and they can take it on board and run with it. It might be sorting out somebody or it might be being the big bad wolf.*

This comment emphasises the importance of support in the telework setting and demonstrates the way Anne provides support to the teleworkers. When support was not provided by managers in the past, Jennifer and Leanne established their own support network.

*Jennifer: I think being a homeworker, even though we know we've got the support of Anne, in the past we've had other managers where they haven't given us any support. So I suppose we've developed our own little environment.*

This 'environment' includes a high level of support and collaboration between the teleworkers and Leanne and Jennifer believe this has enabled them to perform more

effectively in the telework setting. Jennifer describes the way they work together in the following way:

*Jennifer: There's no competition between us. I think that's important. I respect Leanne, she respects me. Any knowledge that Leanne's got, I appreciate it and vice versa. There was the case where there was another couple of homeworkers. They in a way competed. And they didn't, like I'm not out to beat Leanne and she's not out [to beat me]... I would say that's why it works. And in the new position that Anne has got for us, I think the only way it would work in the roles is if we both get on. [Leanne agrees] If I'm working on a project and I'm consultant on that project, something might come up at a meeting, I need to ask Leanne about it. Or she's rung me on things. The way we look at that is, that's making the position work and that's developing our skills and you're never going to stop doing that.*

Leanne and Jennifer spoke about the tendency to put in extra effort because they are teleworking. This is associated with the fact that they feel that telework is a privilege. For example, Jennifer says:

*Jennifer: I think it's a privilege to work from home and it's not for a minute that we don't think that it is, hey Lee? [Leanne agrees] But we always think that everyone gives 100% with their job but I think that we think that we should give 110% so nobody can say anything. We're pretty proud of our work.*

The teleworkers put in extra effort to ensure that telework is a success and to try and ensure that this 'privilege' will not be removed.

*Jennifer. I know we both feel that we have try to give 110% all the time. We would never want anyone, whether it be Anne or Eric or anybody, to*

*be able to say that it's a downfall. Us working from home. Or we're letting the team down because we're not here. We've always made a conscious effort to really make it work.*

The teleworkers are very conscious of the image they project to Anne, and other organisational members, in regard to their performance. This tendency to overcompensate has been abused in the past by a previous manager. For example, Jennifer recalls that it was not uncommon to get work related phone calls from this manager at ten o'clock in the evening. This same manager used to call at other inappropriate times as well.

*Jennifer. ...I'd be making dinner for the kids [when he would call]. And stupid me, I used to take the phone calls. But that was our fault because we didn't put a stop to it. It's very hard. We thought the direction was coming from [a more senior manager]. We didn't know.*

These comments highlight the way the work relationship can be strained in telework settings. Leanne and Jennifer's previous manager appeared to assume that the flexibility in hours that telework offers meant that the teleworkers could be contacted outside of standard work hours.

When Anne, Leanne and Jennifer began working together eighteen months ago, their relationship was characterised by high uncertainty. Initially, the home-based workers were wary of Anne and were worried that they would lose their jobs, or at least would be forced to return to the office.

*Jennifer: the company sometimes wonders why people are on the defensive straight away. Whereas if you explained, if Eric [a more senior manager] had of explained to us, our department; his future thoughts of the department and why he wanted to bring Anne in, why it was important to bring someone in from the outside; it would have been a lot easier for us.*

Anne's management style impacted on the frequency of interaction that the home-based workers were used to having with their previous managers. This contributed to a high level of uncertainty for the teleworkers.

*Leanne: it was a big change for us from getting a phone call every day.*

*Like we probably only talk to Anne once a month and you think, 'ooh, we don't talk to her much'. But we were so used to getting phone calls every day.'*

They now describe their work relationship as being characterised by high trust (see below, p. 114). What processes were associated with this shift to high trust? The first significant incident for Leanne and Jennifer was learning that Anne had prior experience in managing home-based workers. Leanne and Jennifer recollect some of the thoughts and feelings they experienced when Anne started.

*Jennifer: when we get a new boss, you really don't know. You've got to try and build that relationship. Leanne and I have never worked side by side with Anne. So we've got to build that relationship. We don't know whether Anne believes in homeworkers or we don't know if Anne would like to see all her staff sitting next to her...We did talk about it, that we were getting this new boss. You know, how are we going to react. I remember Leanne and I talking and I said 'look, all we can do is do what we've done, we've got all these other bosses. Just do our job to the best of our ability and make ourselves available to our boss. And she'll work out what sort of people we are.'*

*Leanne: I was probably very wary. Thinking new manager, what changes? You're always thinking what's going to happen, does she like homework? Because a lot of managers don't. That was probably the main concern. What's going to change. Are they going to say 'right, you'll have to come*

*back in the office.’ But after speaking to Anne, when she started we were quite put at ease.*

*Jennifer. Anne pretty well did that straight away. Anne made sure that she had contact with us. And one of the first things that Anne told us was that, well I think we probably asked her, was about if she’d had any involvement with homeworkers. And Anne straight away said that she’d had people that had worked even overseas and had been reporting to her. That pretty well straight away told us that we’re going to be ok.*

The next important step was the consultation and development of new work roles with Leanne and Jennifer. Leanne and Jennifer felt that Anne demonstrated confidence in them by listening to their ideas and taking action with more senior management in an effort to get their ideas introduced. This contributed to the development of trust in their work relationship.

*Jennifer: I think one important thing about a relationship is that you’re not going to, it’s something that has to be built over time. I’d say the 18 months. One thing that Anne has done that all the other managers have never done is that they’ve been all talk. They’ve given Leanne and I praise, they’ve said you do this well, you do that well. We’ve been saying we want to do this consultancy role, we feel that we can make a good contribution up front, not when we get it in our testing. And Anne is the only one. All the rest of them have said yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, we’ll talk to management, we’ll talk to management, but Anne is the only one that’s done it. So I think she should really be praised for that. To get it through management, as you could imagine, would have been a very hard thing to do. In that respect, Anne has shown us that she believes in us. And I think we have built a really trusting relationship, the three of us.*



*Leanne. Well we've got a manager here who actually recognised what we wanted to do and did something about it. We've never had that before. I don't know how many years we'd been saying it.*

An important point is the mixed interpretations by home-based workers of actions taken by Anne. For example, Anne introduced a system for documenting time spent on projects in an effort to record what the department as a whole was spending its time on. This information provided the basis for Anne's proposals for change to management. However, some of the teleworkers interpreted Anne's actions as a tightening of control.

*Jennifer. Another important thing is that Anne really pushed time management. And got us homeworkers, and everyone in the office as well, to really focus and record on our Electronic Time Professional [time management software], exactly where our time goes. So then Anne could see where Leanne and I were spending this time. We were spending it talking to programmers, we were spending it talking to testers. Explaining things. So that's why Anne could see that and she had more of a/*

*Leanne. Backup/*

*Jennifer. To go to the management. So that was really good. Whereas some of the other homeworkers saw it as 'she's trying to watch us. She doesn't trust us.' Where we could really see the benefits.*

Leanne and Jennifer interpreted the above action as a benefit to them whereas they recall that the other home-based workers found it intrusive.

The development of the work relationship was a two-way process and Jennifer points this out in describing the approach she and Leanne adopted in an effort to forge their work relationship with Anne:

*Jennifer. I think over the time, the way Leanne and I have approached Anne, we've always tried to be open and say 'if you need our help, we want to be involved'. I think if we didn't do that, it would be hard for Anne to know that we did want to be involved in working out the new processes. So we've done our bit, and then Anne has done her bit. [That is] to try to show us how the new processes are going to work and they're going to be beneficial to Leanne and me, and also to the department. So I think it's like a two-way thing. It has to be. We've given a bit, Anne's given a bit.*

Finally, an important factor influencing the development of the work relationship was the inclusion of the home-based workers in the team meetings. An important change that occurred was when Anne started as manager and implemented teleconferencing and face-to-face meetings so that the teleworkers were included in the team process.

*Leanne: these days, we're in the meetings. We have them [teleconferences] fortnightly now, and meet [face-to-face ] once a month and we know everything.*

More frequent meetings enable Leanne and Jennifer to feel like they know what is happening in the workplace and develop work relationships with their colleagues.

*Leanne. for us, that was fantastic.*

*Kerry. So prior to that you hadn't been involved in the team meeting?*

*Leanne. No, we would just read minutes. And then we'd ring up and say 'what does this mean?' This idea of Anne's just works so well. We feel like we're being included that bit more and that communication has picked up.*

Leanne remembers that there were a lot of meetings at the outset, when Anne and the team were planning the new processes to be used in the department. Most of these meetings were conducted face-to-face and 'We'd all sit around the table and throw around

ideas on new processes.’ Anne, Leanne and Jennifer all agree that this contributed to the development of their work relationship. The face-to-face meetings have also led to improved work relationships with other team members.

*Jennifer. ‘I really think these monthly meetings, they have helped us, sort of get to know Anne and all the guys in the department.’*

#### **5.2.4.4 The work relationship from the perspective of the manager**

When Anne commenced her position as manager of the Implementation Group she entered an environment of high uncertainty that was rife with rumours. Anne recalls ‘that there was a lot of distrust and suspicion amongst the homeworkers’ in relation to organisational changes that had been implemented in the department without consultation and discussion with the teleworkers. There had been little communication regarding Anne’s role, which was to bring about specific changes in that section of the organisation, including changing existing processes. There was a lack of understanding by the teleworkers about the restructure and the new roles that each of the group members needed to move into.

*Anne: ...I was brought in to totally shake up the way that testing of the software was handled. And that was something that wasn’t communicated to the guys at home. Or for that matter, it wasn’t communicated real well to the guys in here either, before I arrived. I think life would have been 100% easier for me if my manager had actually, it took him 12 months before I finally got him to, ‘really you need to come and talk to these people and tell them it’s not just me making this up off the top of my head, that I am working to a directive’.*

The home-based workers needed to adjust to a change in management style when Anne commenced.

*Anne: I guess that’s something else for me when I first came in. It appeared to me that the previous managers had been very directive in*

*their management style and it was all micro managed type stuff whereas I know that with my style, probably because of the environment that I've worked in, it's much more a delegation style. People are given their projects and yes, I'll check periodically on what's happening. But basically I'm saying it's your responsibility and you can work with that. Both Leanne and Jennifer, it's great because I'm confident now and trust that they can work with that management style which is really good.*

Anne believes that there is now a high level of trust and respect in their work relationship.

*Anne. From my perspective, I trust the two of them implicitly. I trust the advice they give. I trust them to deliver what they say they're going to deliver, when they say they're going to deliver it. I don't have an issue. I don't think they're at home having Tupperware parties and billing to the company.*

One way that trust has been developed is through the meeting of each other's expectations in regard to performance. For example Anne says:

*Anne: the fact that both Leanne and Jennifer have delivered on what they said they would. And maybe it's a matter of I've delivered on what I said I would. That's really where the thing [ie trust] comes in. It doesn't matter whether you're face-to-face or not in that respect.*

The main factor that enables Anne to manage with ease in a telework setting is that both Leanne and Jennifer are in Anne's words 'beautifully self-sufficient' meaning that they do not need to be closely supervised.

*Anne: Well most of the people here, I don't think I have anyone in the team who has to be micro managed. So it doesn't really matter whether they're*

*sitting in the office here or working from home. It's not like I've got to be there every five minutes looking over their shoulder and watching what they're doing. Everybody's pretty self-sufficient. They've all got their objectives. It doesn't matter whether they're at home or in the office if they've got an issue, they either drop me a GroupWise or come and see me, or whatever, meet me up the hallway. I guess the only difference in managing is Jennifer and Leanne miss out on the general stand around and gossip of a morning. I'm hardly likely to ring up and go 'well hi, I just thought I ring you up this morning and tell you this is what I did last weekend.*

Anne recounted a story to contrast the 'self-sufficiency' of Leanne and Jennifer with the way Natalie, an inexperienced teleworker, operated.

*Anne. If you needed to be micro-managed, you need to be here. But you don't. That's really what it boils down to. And it's quite interesting that of the staff that are based in here, on the rare occasion that, one of the girls, Natalie, recently, she and her fiancé were negotiating some loans and things, and they needed to see people where they live at Wyee, and she said 'could I work from home so that I can go to this 11 o'clock meeting with the bank manager'. And I said yes. It was really interesting that she made a point every two hours sending me a GroupWise [the internal email system]. I got the feeling she was doing that so it was like 'see I am working. I'm online, I'm working'. You guys don't have to, because I know you do it.*

Anne does not feel like she needs to physically see the teleworkers performing because their work output is visible.

*Anne. I think the thing is, providing you're picking the right areas to have your telecommuters, you're ok. I mean programmers, testing, document writing, especially in IT. Any of those things, they're so quantifiable. You can see whether someone's delivering or not, whether they're working or not. And if they're working from home, that's the other thing, I don't really care whether the girls work all night and then go shopping and swimming all day. As long as I know that these are the days they work, I'm really not fussed what time of day they do their work, as long as it happens.*

Anne believes that organisational members need to gain experience in the co-located setting before moving into a telework arrangement.

*Anne: I couldn't hire another homeworker in and put them at home cold. Possibly you could take someone who's already been working in the office and put them at home. But you certainly couldn't hire someone in from outside. And that's, as the others have left and I've replaced, that's why they've been replaced in the office. Not because of a thing about homeworkers. It was just that you just can't put somebody new in at home.*

#### **5.2.4.5 Summary**

There is little interaction between Anne (the manager) and Leanne and Jennifer (the teleworkers) beyond the fortnightly staff meetings that are conducted either by telephone or in the co-located setting. Leanne and Jennifer both feel that it is important to be self-sufficient in order to demonstrate their ability to operate successfully in the telework setting. This is congruent with Anne's preference for not wanting to micromanage the staff in her section. Leanne and Jennifer have adjusted to their minimal level of interaction with Anne. The teleworkers have been teleworking for over nine years and have had a number of managers during that time. The way they work with Anne contrasts with work relationships they have experienced with other managers. For example, another manager consulted with the teleworkers on a daily basis. The teleworkers considered this

managers behaviour intrusive as he used to contact them at inconvenient hours in the evening.

The teleworkers emphasised the importance of their performance and felt that they needed to work harder in the telework setting than their colleagues in the co-located setting. This was related to them thinking of telework as a privilege that might be taken away.

Both the teleworkers emphasised the issue of support and drew attention to the way Anne supported them in their telework setting. She has demonstrated support to the teleworkers by getting senior management to take up the teleworkers ideas and implement them in a recent restructure in their section. The teleworkers now work in a new role as consultants within the organisation. This requires them to have more regular contact with their work colleagues (who operate in the co-located setting) in order to perform successfully. This has meant a significant change as previously the teleworkers had little contact with their work colleagues in the office.

Both the teleworkers and their manager felt that trust was an important aspect of their work relationship. Anne spoke about trust in relation to the performance of the teleworkers. She trusted the teleworkers because they met her requirements in respect to performance. Anne felt that she did not need to closely supervise the teleworkers. The teleworkers connected trust with Anne demonstrating that she ‘believed’ in them.

The teleworkers spoke about the way they have organised their telework setting so that they work hours that suit them and there is flexibility within those hours to attend activities at their children’s school etc. Included in the organisation of their telework setting is a high level of interaction with, and support to each other. They are in regular contact with each other and work closely with each other on their respective projects. Both Leanne and Jennifer want to continue teleworking. Neither want to come back into the office but they enjoy the monthly meetings in the office as it enables them to establish contacts with colleagues and develop their work relationships with their manager and their work colleagues.

### 5.3 Part 2: an analysis of the work relationships using the model

In Part 1 of the analysis the interview material was presented to provide an account of the work relationship from the perspective of the teleworker and the perspective of the manager. In Part 2, the teleworker and manager accounts from Part 1 are examined using the concepts from the model developed in Chapter 3 to provide an analysis of the teleworker – manager relationships. The accounts of the work relationship from the perspective of the teleworker and their manager will be analysed using the concepts from the model to identify which work relationship behaviours are being emphasised by teleworkers and their managers, thus locating the stage of the relationship in relation to the model.

#### 5.3.1 The model re-visited

The model (see Figure 5-1) developed in Chapter 3 provided key concepts for exploring manager-subordinate work relationships in telework settings (see section 3.4, on page 36 for a detailed explanation of the model).

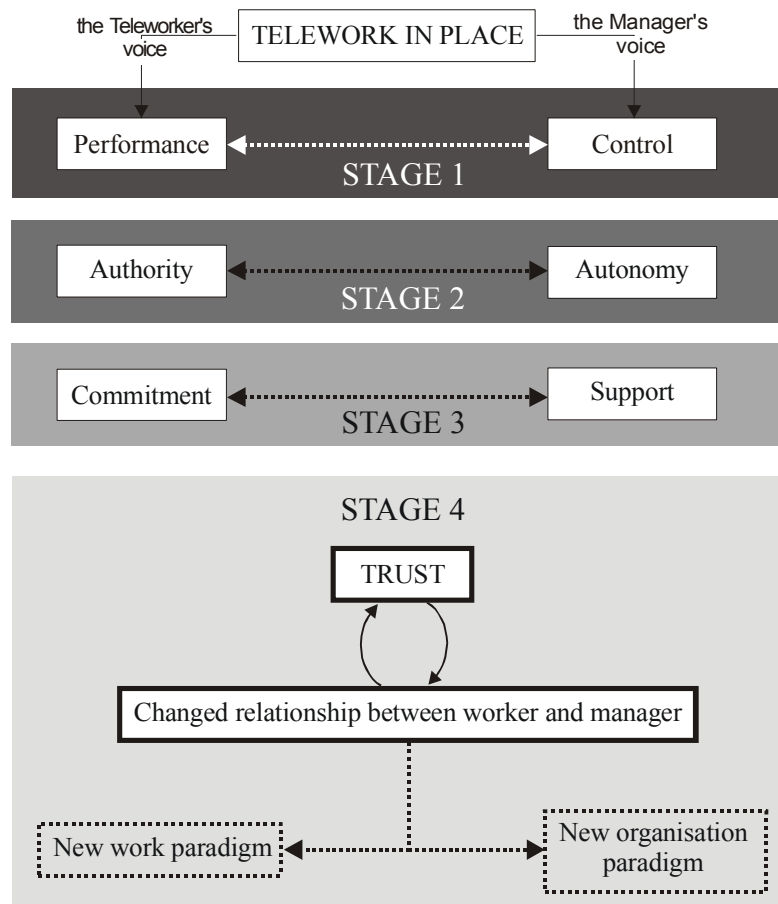


Figure 5-1 A model for exploring teleworker-manager relationships in telework settings



The model suggests that when a worker shifts from a co-located setting to a telework setting, that is, when the employee commences teleworking, there will be an emphasis on performance and control in the work relationship behaviours of the worker and their manager (stage 1). However, when the teleworker and their manager settle into their telework relationship other work relationship behaviours will follow on, such as consideration of autonomy and authority (stage 2), and commitment and support dynamics (stage 3). Finally, trust (stage 4) will be evident in the telework relationship as a function of the successful working through of the autonomy, authority, commitment and support themes.

### *5.3.2 Colin (teleworker) and John (manager)*

Performance and control behaviours are no longer emphasised in this work relationship. Colin is not concerned about his performance in the telework setting and John is not concerned with trying to control Colin. From John's perspective, offering telework to employees at Colin's level is unproblematic, as they have already proven their competence and trustworthiness in the co-located setting. Colin has already proven that he can perform in a high autonomy co-located work relationship. However, this does not mean that performance and control behaviours have not been emphasised in their telework relationship. Colin mentioned that he and John had had disagreements over John checking on him in the past. Also, Colin linked the development of trust in their relationship with his work performance. In other words, Colin believes that John trusts him because he has proved that is able to perform in the telework setting. This suggests that performance was an important aspect in the development of their telework relationship. However, their work relationship appears to have moved beyond an emphasis on performance and control.

The emphasis in this work relationship can now be said to reflect the themes in the next stage of the model: authority and autonomy. Without any prompting, John used the language of 'autonomy' in the interviews and emphasised the importance of autonomy in the work relationship. John described how only a certain type of person is moved into a telework setting in this organisation. This type of person is a self-manager, rather than a person requiring supervision. John expects that a person in Colin's position would be able to operate successfully given a high level of autonomy in a telework setting. Colin does not need to interact closely with work colleagues that are physically located in the co-

located setting and his immediate work colleagues are located in geographically dispersed locations. Therefore, there is flexibility to set-up the telework setting in the way he chooses rather than needing to ‘fit’ within the organisational domain of the co-located work setting. Colin often works outside of the temporal boundaries of the co-located setting. This autonomy is associated with Colin being able to get on with his job in the telework setting.

Colin indicated that autonomy is needed in his work relationship with John because close monitoring of his work is not only impractical, it is also undesirable and unnecessary. Colin considered trust to be an important feature of his work relationship with John. One reason that trust is important is because Colin associates it with providing the condition for the high autonomy he expects in his work relationship with John.

There is some evidence of a high level of commitment in the work relationship as Colin has shifted from teleworking three days each week to a fulltime teleworking arrangement. Also, there were expressions of support for the teleworkers from John. He was concerned that organisational checks be put in place so that teleworkers do not become ‘burnt out’. It is suggested therefore that their work relationship might possibly be shifting into the next stage, which emphasises commitment and support. In summary, Colin and John’s work relationship can be positioned in relation to the model at entering stage 3 (see Figure 5-2).

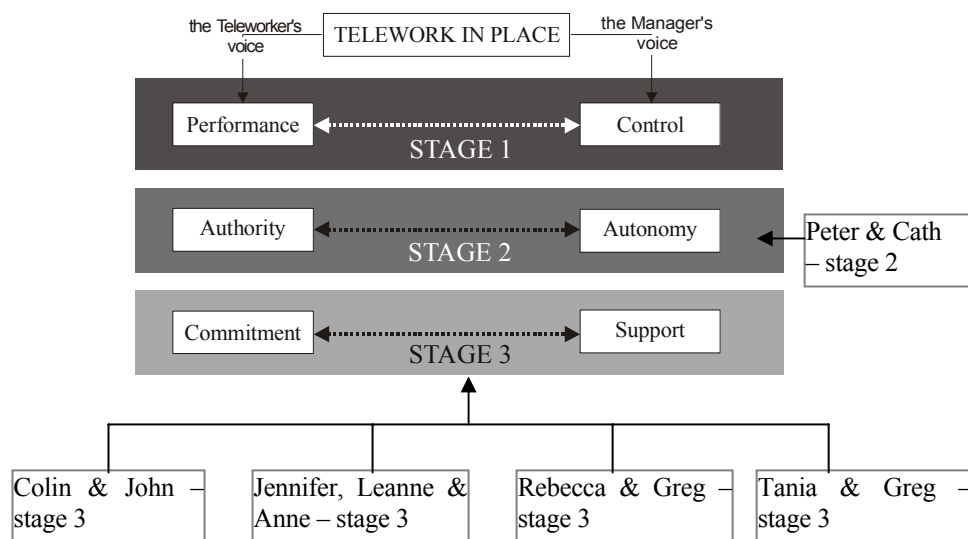


Figure 5-2 The stages of the teleworker – manager work relationships in relation to the model

### 5.3.3 *Tania (teleworker) and Greg (manager)*

The work relationship behaviours of performance, control, authority, autonomy, commitment and support have been successfully worked through in this work relationship. Greg emphasised that managing based on control is both impractical and unnecessary in this organisation. Greg has the confidence that Tania will meet his expectations in regard to performance, resulting in a work relationship where autonomy has been established. Greg considered that Tania is 'self-directed' and 'control[s]' the areas for which she is responsible. There is an emphasis in the work relationship on self-management. Tania has a good understanding of Greg's expectations in relation to desired values and behaviours and the way she performs at work meets his expectations.

Tania provides a direct expression of her authority to telework in the interviews. Tania talks about the way she organises her telework setting in a way that suits her particular needs as a parent of three small children. Tania is quite open about the fact that she may be at her daughter's playgroup or doing other family related activities during the day and feels quite confident that Greg and other members of the organisation understand and support her telework arrangement. This suggests that authority behaviours have been established in the work relationship. It also points to a relationship between the granting of autonomy in the telework relationship and authority.

Tania and Greg emphasised commitment and support in their work relationship. This suggests that the dynamics of the work relationship have moved beyond an emphasis on authority and autonomy. Greg described Tania (and Rebecca) as committed and as having the interests of the organisation as their interests. Greg trusts that Tania is 'thinking like me'. There is a mutual recognition by Tania and Greg that the support provided to Tania enables her to organise her work flexibly and this enhances her work performance. This support is reciprocated by Tania with a high level of commitment to the organisation in general, and to teleworking over the long-term. Tania did not speak about commitment specifically in the interviews but gave lots of examples of her commitment to teleworking. She intends to continue teleworking over the long-term and has built a home office in her new home. Greg was the only manager in the study who spoke specifically about support, and emphasised the importance of support in his work relationships with Tania and Rebecca. Tania (and Rebecca) both referred to the support

that Greg provides in their respective work relationships. In summary, Tania and Greg's work relationship can be positioned in relation to the model at stage 3 (see Figure 5-2).

#### **5.3.4 Rebecca (teleworker) and Greg (manager)**

Control has been successfully resolved and is no longer emphasised in this work relationship. Rather than feeling that he needs to supervise Rebecca, Greg has the confidence that she will meet his expectations in regard to performance. While Greg does not control the work that Rebecca does, he does manage the way the co-located setting is organised. Greg has been able to organise the co-located setting so that he has confidence that Rebecca (and Tania) will be performing in the telework setting. Greg does not need to emphasise control in the work relationship because he feels confident that Rebecca will be meeting his expectations in regard to performance and commitment. This confidence is associated with the organisational processes that are in place such as an emphasis in the selection process on choosing employees with values that are aligned with the goals of the organisation.

While control is not a concern for Greg in his work relationship with Rebecca, Rebecca placed a lot of emphasis in the interviews on performance and establishing her performance in the telework setting. This might suggest that Rebecca is still at stage 1 in her work relationship with Greg. However a closer analysis of her emphasis on performance reveals that these concerns are expressed in relation to Rebecca's work relationships with her work colleagues and customers outside the organisation.

Greg considers that Rebecca is 'self-directed' and 'control[s]' the areas for which she is responsible and there is an emphasis in the work relationship on self-management. This can be interpreted as an expression of autonomy. The autonomy in their work relationship appears to suit both parties. Greg expects Rebecca to be self-directed and Rebecca enjoys the autonomy in her work relationship with Greg as it has made her more independent.

While Greg appears to have resolved questions around control and autonomy, authority appears to be a current struggle for Rebecca. Rebecca does not name authority, or more appropriately a lack of authority in the interviews, however she draws attention to this dynamic when discussing her work relationships with work colleagues and customers. For example, she is still unable to be authoritative in terms of being firm about the days

when she is working from home. Therefore, while Greg is emphasising stage 2 or possibly even stage 3 behaviours in their work relationship, Rebecca is drawing attention to a deficit in terms of stage 2 behaviours, in relation to her work relationships with colleagues in the co-located setting. Having drawn attention to the connection between work relationships with work colleagues in the co-located setting and authority, the work relationship can still be positioned at stage 3 as there were numerous references by both Greg and Rebecca to the support he provides in their work relationship. Also, Rebecca signalled a commitment to telework through her involvement in the telework support group at her workplace. In summary, the work relationship can be positioned in relation to the model at stage 3 (see Figure 5-2).

### *5.3.5 Peter (teleworker) and Cath (manager)*

The way Peter and Cath spoke about trust suggests that they have resolved questions around performance and control in their work relationship. Trust is an important feature of the work relationship for both Peter and Cath. Cath trusts that Peter will be performing in the telework setting. Trust has been developed in their telework relationship through Peter meeting Cath's expectations in regard to performance over a period of time.

The absence of almost any communication between Peter and Cath in the telework situation suggests a work relationship where Peter has autonomy to organise the telework setting. However, the way his telework setting is organised is bounded by requirements of the organisation in terms of the number of days that can be worked at home as well as hours that can be worked. Teleworkers in this organisation are required to work during the core hours of 9am to 4pm. However Peter did mention that there had been some informal negotiation with Cath around incorporating more flexibility into his work hours. Peter may have negotiated authority to telework with Cath but some of his comments in the interviews suggest that he may still be negotiating authority to telework with his work colleagues. The highly circumscribed nature of the telework arrangement in this organisation suggests that authority to telework is still being negotiated in this organisation.

Cath is very conscious of the way she interacts with Peter in the telework setting. For example, Cath does not want to appear authoritarian in her communication with Peter. This could be interpreted as an expression of support or, the whole absence of interaction in the telework relationship and the emphasis by Cath on the weekly meetings in the co-

located setting, may suggest that Cath is still working through the question of control. For example, the autonomy that Peter has in the telework setting may be autonomy by default as a result of the lack of contact by Cath. During the interviews, Cath talked about the management activities that take place at the weekly meetings in terms of the steering of the project, which suggests that Peter is not operating completely autonomously. In other words, when Peter is in the telework setting he still operates within clearly defined work goals which are established on a weekly basis at the team meetings.

There is little evidence in their work relationship of the stage 3 dynamics of commitment and support. For example, various comments from Peter during the interviews suggest that he may not be particularly committed to maintaining the telework relationship over the long-term. Peter finds teleworking rather isolating, and at times frustrating.

In summary, there is some evidence of authority and autonomy in Cath and Peter's work relationship, and the questions of performance and control in the telework setting seems to have been successfully worked through, so the work relationship can be positioned at stage 2 on the model (see Figure 5-2).

### *5.3.6 Leanne, Jennifer (teleworkers) and Anne (manager)*

Trust was emphasised by Anne as a significant feature of her work relationships with Jennifer and Leanne. Anne considered that trust enabled her to manage more easily in the telework setting as she did not need to 'micromanage' the teleworkers. Trust had developed over a period of time and was related to Anne having the opportunity to establish that the teleworkers were performing successfully in the telework setting. Anne was able to establish that the teleworkers were performing through the results they were producing and she developed confidence that the teleworkers were able to get on with their job in the telework setting. This suggests that Leanne, Jennifer and Anne have been able to successfully work through the stage 1 work relationship behaviours of performance and control.

The teleworkers, Leanne and Jennifer, have expressed autonomy in their work relationship with Anne. The only contact they might have with Anne is at the fortnightly staff meetings. The minimal contact suggests that the teleworkers organise their own work schedule. There also appears to be a reasonable degree of autonomy to organise their telework setting in a way that suits them. For example, Leanne mentioned that there

was flexibility in the hours she works and she sometimes attends functions at her children's school during the day. Anne also stated that she did not really care when the teleworkers were working, as long as they were producing outcomes.

Both Jennifer and Leanne consider that it is important that they solve their own problems in the telework setting rather than seeking Anne's input, and Anne prefers not to micromanage the teleworkers. This suggests that the teleworkers have authority to manage their telework setting. However, the teleworkers are still very conscious of the image they present to Anne and they feel they need to put in a '110% effort' to maintain the privilege of telework. This suggests that while they may have the authority to manage their telework setting, they may not have fully negotiated complete authority to telework. Even so, the teleworkers seem very committed to the telework arrangement and have no desire to return to the co-located setting, other than on their monthly visit for meetings. While Anne did not speak about support, perhaps support can be assumed in the work relationship as it was emphasised by the teleworkers. The teleworkers often spoke about the support that Anne provided to them, particularly in relation to establishing the monthly face-to-face meetings. They also stressed the relationship between Anne's support and their commitment to their current telework arrangement. The commitment to telework can be assumed from the duration of the telework arrangement, both teleworkers have worked that way for over 9 years, as well as the 110% effort the teleworkers put into maintaining the work relationship. This suggests that the emphasis in this work relationship is on stage 3 behaviours (see Figure 5-2).

#### 5.4 Establishing the robustness of the model

Through an examination of the interview data in terms of what behaviours were being emphasised by the teleworkers and their managers at the time of their respective interviews, the work relationships between the 5 sets of teleworker – manager pairs have been placed as to their respective stages on the model (see Figure 5-2). This suggests that the concepts outlined in the model provide a useful tool for exploring manager-subordinate work relationships in telework settings. However, as a preliminary to using the model as a basis for developing grounded theory on telework relationships, the robustness of the model needs to be established.

First, it is important to point out that only the first three stages of the model have been verified by the data. As trust was emphasised by both teleworkers and their managers at

each stage of the work relationship, the original conceptualisation of trust as a final outcome in the work relationship appears problematic. For example, trust was spoken of in relation to performing in the telework setting. The teleworkers and their managers both spoke of the relationship between the teleworkers performance and the development of trust. It was also spoken of in relation to autonomy and in relation to commitment. In this sense, trust can be understood as code for particular work relationship dynamics at each stage of the model. In view of this, the way trust was spoken of in each of the work relationships has been used to locate the work relationships in relation to the three stages in the model, rather than conceptualising it as a final outcome.

The robustness of the model also needs to be checked by confirming that other macro factors such as gender can be discounted as the primary explanation for the change in the work relationship. For example, the gender of the teleworkers and their managers might account for the changes that are taking place in the work relationship rather than the fact that it has moved into the telework setting. Therefore, we need to examine the data and consider if being a male or a female manager, or a male or female teleworker, accounts for the change in dynamics in the work relationships. If we examine the cases by gender, for example male managers compared with female managers, the work relationships are at all three stages, with no clustering at a particular stage as a result of the gender of the manager. The same can be said when the cases are examined in relation to the gender of the teleworker. While macro factors such as gender will play a part in dynamics of the work relationship in the telework setting, there is no evidence to suggest that it is contributing to an emphasis on particular work relationship behaviours at any stage of the model.

Therefore, as evidence of the work relationship behaviours outlined in the model can be found in each of the teleworker – manager sets, and these dynamics do not appear to be related to macro factors such as gender, it can be concluded that the first three stages in the model provide a plausible explanation for the dynamics in each of the teleworker – manager work relationships when entering the telework setting. The analysis of the data does not, however, support the conceptualisation of trust proposed in the original model. Initially, trust was conceptualised as an outcome of the working through of stages 1, 2 and 3 of the model. Instead, it was found that trust was spoken of at each of the stage of the work relationship. Therefore, only the first three levels of the model: performance and



control, authority and autonomy, and commitment and support, will be used in the following chapter as the basis for developing a grounded theory on manager-subordinate work relationships in telework settings.

## CHAPTER 6 – GROUNDED THEORY

### 6 Grounded Theory

#### 6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, a grounded theory is developed which offers an explanation for the development of work relationships in telework settings as found in the present study. A grounded theory approach draws on the data gathered during the research process to inductively develop a plausible explanation for the phenomenon being studied (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The grounded theory also points to emergent areas to be explored in further research.

#### 6.2 Theorising work relationship dynamics in telework settings

In the analysis of each of the teleworker – manager work relationships in Chapter 5, each of the pairs were placed as to their respective stage on the model (see Figure 5-2). The ability to position the work relationships at stage 1, 2 or 3 using the concepts from the model suggests that the model provides a reasonably robust account of the varying work relationship dynamics in each of the teleworker – manager sets in the study. Taking the three stages of the model: performance-control, authority-autonomy, and commitment-support, as a starting point or given for discussing work relationships in telework settings, the question that needs to be explained by the grounded theory is how and why do the work relationships shift from stage 1 to stage 2, and from stage 2 to stage 3? The following grounded theory has been developed to offer an explanation for the work relationship dynamics found in the present study. Examples from the cases will be used to illustrate this theory.

In stage 1 of the model there is an emphasis on performance behaviours by the teleworker and control behaviours by the manager. All of the cases demonstrate that stage 1 behaviour was evident when the work relationship shifted into the telework setting. Interestingly though, the expression of these behaviours was in the opposite direction to that outlined in the model, that is, teleworkers spoke about control and the managers spoke about the teleworkers' performance. There was a reluctance by most of the managers to speak directly about control and this is understandable as the emphasis in many of the work relationships had shifted to the authority – autonomy rung of stage 2

behaviours. However, this does not mean that control had not been present in the initial telework relationship. For example, Colin (teleworker) spoke about disagreements between he and John (manager) in regard to John checking up on him. Leanne and Jennifer (teleworker) spoke about the detailed recording of their work schedule that they needed to complete for Anne when she (Anne) first commenced work as their manager. Peter (teleworker) spoke about the weekly meetings at his workplace where he provided feedback to Cath (manager) on his work progress. All of the managers spoke about how the teleworkers had been able to demonstrate their performance in the telework setting. This recognition of the teleworker's ability to perform in the telework setting can be understood as a confirmation of control being present in the telework setting by the manager.

*Stage 1 can be thought of as the proving stage in the development of a work relationship in a telework setting.* The teleworkers wanted to prove that they could perform in the telework setting and their managers wanted to ensure that the teleworker's performance was maintained in the telework setting, that is, they wanted to maintain control of their teleworker's performance.

The findings from the data analysis suggest that in all of the studied cases their work relationships had moved beyond an emphasis on performance and control and that in particular the notion of autonomy was being expressed—particularly by managers—when talking about the current state of their work relationship. For example, Anne stated that she was not concerned with what time of the day that Jennifer and Leanne worked, as long as they completed their work. John frequently used the term autonomy when describing his work relationship with Colin, particularly in relation to the importance of Colin being able to operate autonomously. Examples of autonomy operating in the work relationship were provided by the teleworkers when they spoke about the flexibility afforded by teleworking. For example Tania, Colin, Rebecca, Leanne, and Jennifer were able, in varying degrees, to choose their own work hours and to schedule their own work tasks in the telework setting.

The other side in the stage 2 relationship dynamic is authority. From the teleworkers perspective, stage 2 in particular is about establishing authority over their work domain in which they have been already granted their autonomy of operation. In other words, it is about becoming a 'self-manager' in the telework setting. In part 2 of the analysis, it was

found that the day-to-day decision-making had been generally handed over to the teleworkers. The shift in authority from the manager to the teleworker was expressed by teleworkers and their managers who both considered that the close supervision of work was impractical and unnecessary. Some of the managers indeed referred to their teleworkers with the term ‘self-managers’.

So why did the work relationship shift from an emphasis on performance and control to an emphasis on authority and autonomy? It is proposed that there is a shift because the manager wants to maximise the performance of the teleworker in the telework setting and recognises that this can be achieved through granting their teleworker’s autonomy in their work relationship. When autonomy behaviour is introduced into the work relationship the teleworker attempts to produce a working environment that is conducive to their particular situation. For example, a teleworker with young children will organise their telework setting so they are able to incorporate their responsibilities as a parent into their work setting. This organisation of their telework setting enables the teleworker to continue to perform their work but in a way that fits in with their other responsibilities. This means that work is able to co-exist with other parts of the teleworker’s life, allowing the teleworker to continue performing as a productive member of the organisation. From the teleworker’s perspective, authority needs to be established in the work relationship not only so they are able to get on with their day-to-day work activities in the telework setting, but in order that the telework domain becomes a legitimate work domain. The process for legitimating the telework domain is discussed below.

In the stage 2 work relationship the teleworkers were found to have successfully negotiated a work relationship where the manager managed them in relation to authority – autonomy, but this newly negotiated relationship was only sanctioned in the telework setting. This was particularly evident in Peter and Cath’s work relationship. Their work relationship in the telework setting was very different to the work relationship in the co-located setting. Their newly negotiated teleworker – manager work relationship was only legitimate within the telework setting and when Peter (the teleworker) stepped back into the organisation, he did not have the authority to operate in a ‘self-manager’ vein. Peter had negotiated authority and autonomy in the telework context but when he stepped back into the co-located setting Cath (the manager) wanted to manage him in the same way she managed the other organisational members in the co-located domain.

Cath and Peter's case provides a particularly clear illustration of the necessary shifts in management when applied in the telework context in contrast to managing within the organisational domain (the co-located setting) in the presence of the teleworker. While Peter had negotiated authority and autonomy in his own telework domain, Peter was not granted such authority and autonomy in the co-located setting. When in the co-located setting Peter needed to operate under the same sanctions granted to other members of the team by their manager. Thus the teleworker needs to learn how to move in and out of the newly established work relationship which emphasises authority in the telework setting, to the existing work relationship established in the co-located setting as granted for employees (including the teleworker). From the manager's perspective, the manager had to reconsider how to manage each teleworker, who had gained authority in their own telework setting, but who were not necessarily granted such authority when they were back in the co-located setting. In the stage 2 work relationship, the manager is now obliged to shift in and out of managing in the telework and the co-located domain with reference to their teleworker(s).

*Stage 2 can be understood as the legitimating stage of the work relationship.* It is proposed that telework can be recognised as a legitimate activity by the manager when they are able to integrate the work relationship behaviours established with the teleworker in the telework setting with the existing work relationship behaviours established with the entire work unit in the co-located setting. It is about the manager being able to operate with the shift from managing the teleworker in the telework setting to managing the teleworker and the co-located workers as a unit in the co-located setting. Once the manager is able to shift comfortably in and out of these different managing modes in the two different organisational domains, then telework becomes a legitimate activity. The legitimating of the dual work relationships by the manager enables the telework relationship to shift to stage 3.

While the emphasis at stage 2 is on the manager learning to shift in and out of the dual work relationships, the interview data reveals that the legitimisation process is also connected with peer-authority. This is a different understanding of authority to that normally found in the organisational literature. The authority of the telework domain also needs to be acknowledged by the teleworker's colleagues in the co-located setting. The grounded theory in this study focuses on legitimisation from the perspective of the

teleworker – manager relationship, however, further research is needed to explore the complexities of the teleworker – manager relationship suggested by the notion of peer-authority. The work relationship triad of the teleworker – manager – colleagues needs to be further explored to develop the concept of authority in telework relationships.

The emphasis in stage 3 shifts to commitment and support work relationship behaviours. Five of the six teleworker – manager sets in the study demonstrated stage 3 behaviours. Once the manager is comfortable in managing both the teleworker, individually in the telework domain, and the teleworker and the co-located workers, as a group in the co-located domain, which is the key process worked through in the stage 2 work relationship; the manager is then prepared to invest energy in sustaining the dual work systems and the dual work relationships that are now operating. Stage 3 is signalled by the emphasis on support behaviours by the manager. For example, Anne demonstrated support through making the teleworkers more visible to other members of the organisation at regular meetings, and Greg showed support for the telework domains of his employees by leading an organisational wide drive for the implementation of telework.

From the teleworker's perspective, when the manager demonstrates support behaviours for the dual work system, they are then prepared to commit to this system over the long-term. In other words, the teleworker is able to commit to the organisational domain they have established in the telework setting as it has now been publicly sanctioned by their manager through the expression of support. In this sense, commitment and support are concerned with a public commitment to the dual work system by the manager and the teleworker.

*Stage 3 can be understood as the promoting stage of the telework relationship.* The legitimacy of the telework domain is established by the manager in stage 2, and in stage 3 the telework domain needs to be endorsed by work colleagues in the co-located setting. The teleworker and their manager have been able to successfully work through the intricacies of managing dual work relationships in a dual work system and are now able to publicly claim the telework domain as a legitimate way of organising work in the organisation. The individual telework domain constructed by the teleworker is promoted in the broader organisation through the public expression of support by the teleworker's manager. This public expression of support for the telework domain by their manager enables the teleworker to commit to their particular telework domain. This commitment is

demonstrated by the teleworkers in various ways, both materially and symbolically. For example, Colin moved into a fulltime telework arrangement at his organisation; Tania built a home office in her new house, and she was also able to be assertive with her work colleagues about the organisation of her telework domain; Rebecca was instrumental in establishing a telework support group in her workplace; and Leanne and Jennifer began to promote their telework arrangement at the monthly meetings held at their workplace.

In summary, the grounded theory as presented here proposes that there is an emphasis on particular work relationship behaviours or interactions when a designated employee becomes a teleworker (see Figure 6-1). While the stages in the model might imply a linear progression, rather than suggesting that the work relationship is better or improved at each of the stages in the telework setting, it is important to stress that it is just a different emphasis in the relationship at each stage. When telework commences, there is a starting emphasis on performance and control behaviours in forming a new teleworker – manager relationship. The emphasis at this stage of the relationship is more centred on the teleworker as they are concerned with proving that they can perform just as well as, if not better, in the telework setting. In proving their performance, the teleworker signals to their manager that control is present in the telework relationship, and the relationship is able to shift to stage 2. In stage 2 authority and autonomy behaviours are now emphasised. The emphasis at this stage is now centred on the manager as the manager needs to establish that they can comfortably shift from managing the teleworker in the telework setting to managing the teleworker and the co-located workers as a unit in the co-located domain. This stage of the work relationship is about establishing the legitimacy of the dual work systems of the telework and co-located settings. In the telework setting the work relationship emphasises authority – autonomy whereas these work relationship behaviours are not sanctioned in the co-located setting. When the legitimacy of the dual system has been established by the manager the work relationship can shift to stage 3, which emphasises commitment and support behaviours. These behaviours are associated with making the dual work system public throughout the organisation.

Trust was originally conceptualised as the final outcome of the progression through the three stages of the work relationship in the telework setting (Figure 3-1). However, there was no evidence in the interview data to suggest that trust should be placed as a final outcome in the grounded theory. But this does not mean that trust was not present in the

telework relationships, indeed each of the teleworker – manager sets spoke about the importance of trust in their work relationship. Rather than thinking of trust as a final outcome it appears to be present in each of the stages of the telework relationship.

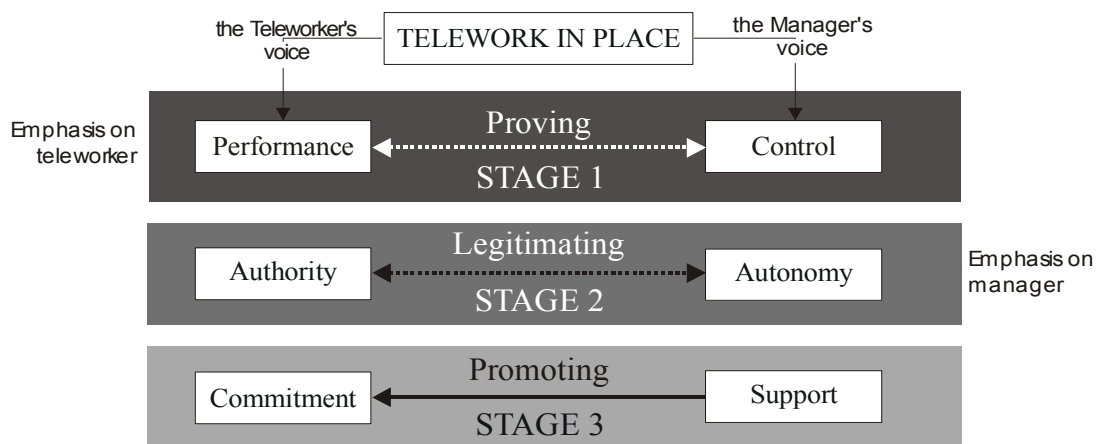


Figure 6-1 Grounded theory model

### 6.3 Limitations of the present study and implications for further research

A grounded theory has been developed using data from particular telework relationships to explain the dynamics of teleworker – manager work relationships in telework settings. Further research now needs to be undertaken in order to develop this theory. However, before further research is undertaken in this field it is important to consider the limitations of this study, particularly in relation to sampling, and the implications this has for further research.

#### 6.3.1 Sampling issues

In this study I have only looked at work relationships in telework settings that could be described as successful. It is highly unlikely that I would have been given access to work relationships where problems were being experienced. For example, an organisation that is well known for its telework program in NSW did not want me to interview their employees as they felt that my topic was too sensitive and they believed there was the potential for negative reports to be collected in the research. The point that I want to draw attention to is that not all telework relationships are successful. For example, during my research I interviewed a teleworker from an organisation who had a 'spectacularly bad' work relationship with her manager. I gained access to this teleworker through a friend of



a friend, not by contacting the organisation directly. This data was not used in the current research as I did not have access to this teleworker's manager. This teleworker eventually left this organisation as she had ongoing problems in establishing legitimacy to telework. This draws attention to the fact that only certain stories about work relationships in telework settings are being told in this piece of research. Perhaps the thesis should be called "an exploration of 'successful' teleworker – manager work relationships in telework settings"? Associated with this, I was probably only given access to teleworker – manager sets where there was a certain level of organisational support for telework. It is highly unlikely that organisations would have wanted me interviewing teleworkers if the work organisation was unhappy with the telework program. This may be related to the minimal access to teleworkers and their managers that I obtained from organisations.

The limited access to studying teleworker – manager work relationships has an impact on the research that is undertaken and may have implications on the methods that are adopted for this type of research. For example, the limited number of cases participating in the research meant that I basically had to 'make do' with what I could get in terms of the research design. Rather than being able to execute a design that would have enabled me to track changes over a period of time in the development of a new telework relationship I needed to be content with interviewing teleworkers and managers who had been in a telework relationship for some time. All of the telework relationships, except Rebecca's, had been established for more than 12 months when I commenced the interviews (see Table 5-1). It is possible that a lot of the changes in the work relationship begin to take place as soon as the work relationship enters the telework setting. Therefore, the collection of 'here and now' accounts of newly formed telework relationships, and the tracking of these over a period of time makes sense theoretically as a preferred research design. However, the attempt to gather here and now accounts of the established telework relationships via email in the current study failed miserably. In this respect the modified research design was guided by what was available in terms of what the research participants were prepared to be involved in. As noted in the methodology chapter, the research participants provided much richer accounts of their work relationships in face-to-face interviews and group meetings rather than via email. It also became apparent that I needed to collect reflective accounts of the work relationship as well as here and now accounts. I needed to try and capture what the work relationship had been like when it first entered the telework setting. The issues around sampling experienced in the current

research have implications in terms of the data collection methods that are considered for further research in this field.

The difficulty in terms of gaining access to teleworker – manager sets suggests that this type of research might be more successfully conducted by an organisational insider rather than an outsider, using an action research methodology. My experience in conducting organisational research suggests that research participants need to feel like there is something in it for them in order to commit and continue to participate in a research process that extends over a period of time. Therefore, the problem-based approach of an action research methodology (eg. Cunningham, 1993) may have appeal within organisations that have telework programs in place. However, there are issues related to power relations in the workplace that need to be considered if choosing this as a method for collecting data on superior-subordinate work relationships. Some organisational members may feel uncomfortable discussing details of their work relationship with their work colleagues. For example, a manager may feel that it is inappropriate to disclose details of their work relationship with a particular subordinate to another subordinate in the organisation, or subordinates may feel uncomfortable disclosing details of their work relationship with their manager to a more senior member in an organisation.

### *6.3.2 The underlying assumptions of the framework*

The framework used in the current study for exploring telework relationships focused on seven work relationship characteristics developed from the telework literature. These were: performance, control, authority, autonomy, commitment, support and trust. This meant that the study was bounded within this framework in terms of the research design, the questions that were asked at the interviews, and the way the interviews have been interpreted. Therefore, it is important to consider what the framework draws attention to and conversely what it ignores. The model draws attention to micro factors in the exploration of work relationships in telework settings and in so doing may overlook broader factors that may influence work relationships such as rapid organisational change, including restructures; organisational culture; and type of industry. It may be worthwhile considering the relationship between the micro concepts of the model and macro factors. For example, when the teleworker is organising their particular telework setting do gender and other factors impact on the organisation of that setting?

The grounded theory suggests that when a teleworker – manager work relationship shifts into a telework setting that particular work relationship behaviours become evident at particular stages in the telework relationship. But does the telework relationship flow forward unproblematically through these stages or is there more complexity, with a more iterative movement in and out of the various stages? For example, might there be trigger events in the work relationship that change the emphasis on a stage 3 relationship back to an emphasis on performance and control? And if so, does this relationship need to go through stage 2 again before shifting to stage 3? The linearity of the model proposed in the grounded theory needs further exploration.

The current study focused on hierarchical work relationships between teleworkers and their managers as control was identified in the literature as a key issue in telework relationships. However, the grounded theory draws attention to the importance of work relationships with work colleagues in the co-located setting, particularly in relation to establishing authority behaviours in the telework relationship. Therefore, further research needs to be undertaken which extends the current research on superior-subordinate relations to include the exploration of work relationships forged at a distance between peers. This is particularly relevant when we think of the new forms of work organisation such as network organisations, as theorists predict that horizontal work relationships will be an important feature of these new forms of work organisation (eg Fulk & DeSanctis, 1995; Jarvenpaa & Leidner, 1999; Lipnack & Stamps, 1999). The grounded theory development in the current study also draws attention to the importance of studying work relationships between colleagues and teleworkers when considering manager – subordinate work relationships, when telework is part of the equation.

### *6.3.3 The limitations of the methodology*

The research methodology used in the current study incorporated a hybrid approach to grounded theory which was more tightly bounded than that proposed by Strauss and Corbin (1990). Core concepts were developed from the telework literature to explore work relationships in telework settings. A less bounded approach where issues emerge from the research data is more in line with a grounded theory approach and may be proposed as a preferred methodology for exploratory research. Although, it can be argued that the questions that are asked and the way research data is interpreted will always be from a particular standpoint and can never be theory neutral. The hybrid methodology

adopted in this study may be more appropriate for the scope of Master's research thesis than a less bounded approach. However, both grounded theory approaches, whether more or less bounded, raise issues in terms of being conducted by a 'novice' researcher. I found that it was very easy to get 'lost' using exploratory methodology and a more tightly structured approach may be more doable within the two-year timeframe imposed by a Master's research program. This particular research project went well beyond this timeframe.

Having noted that concern, however, it is important that more exploratory research is undertaken in this emerging field of study. While I needed to contain the study in an effort to make it 'doable' and opted for a hybrid approach which incorporated key concepts, a more experienced researcher may find it useful to draw on broader literature and a less bounded approach when researching work relationships in telework settings. Because the development of work relationships in telework settings is a relatively unexplored area in organisational research, a more exploratory and less bounded approach certainly has merit at this point in time. This suggestion may seem 'at odds' with a typical research trajectory, where exploratory research is conducted and then followed up with a more focused approach to study. However, the hybrid approach adopted in the current study was more out of necessity than appropriateness. Unfortunately, the hybrid approach forced categories to be imposed in the study which may be premature for the study of work relationships in telework settings. I would recommend taking a step back and adopting a more exploratory approach for further research in this area where predefined categories are not imposed at the outset of the study.

The incorporation of cross-disciplinary perspectives might also prove to be productive for exploring work relationships in telework settings. For example, the inclusion of broader sociological and communication perspectives, which explore the development of distance relationships (other than work relationships), may provide useful themes for exploring distance work relationships. There is also an emerging literature on distance education, which may also provide useful concepts for exploring the development of other types of hierarchical relationships that are forged at a distance.

#### 6.4 Conclusion

This study provides an important contribution to the development of knowledge on work relationships in telework settings. As there is very little qualitative data on telework in

Australia (Meyers & Hearn, 2000), the present study begins to provide specific details about work relationships in telework settings and offers formulation of a grounded theory for explaining these relationships.

The findings from this study suggest that when an employee – manager work relationship moves into a telework setting, their work relationship then changes and consequently must shift through a number of stages. Initially, the employee – manager relationship in the new telework setting is centred on performance and control behaviours. In this first stage of their work relationship development the teleworker sets out to prove to their manager that they can successfully perform their job in the telework setting. The control behaviours of the manager in the telework setting, however, remain the same as they had been in the co-located domain, hence there is little change in the manager’s behaviour in that respect. Therefore, in stage 1 of the telework relationship the emphasis is on the teleworker. When the teleworker is able to signal to their manager that they can successfully perform in the telework setting, the work relationship now shifts to the next stage. In the main, Stage 1 can be thought of as the proving stage in the development of a manager – teleworker relationship in a telework setting with the spotlight directly placed on the teleworker.

In stage 2, the work relationship behaviours at this point emphasise authority and autonomy. Here the teleworker has been granted autonomy by their manager to organise their (the teleworker’s) own telework domain in a way that suits their particular work/life requirements and patterns. This granting of full autonomy is also associated with an increase in authority for the teleworker – in effect the teleworker gains the “rank” of self-manager in the eyes of their immediate manager. In essence, stage 2 can be understood as the legitimating stage of the development of the manager – teleworker relationship.

Of particular interest in this study is the notion of the telework setting as a distinct system of the parent organisation. In contrast to the existing domain of the employing organisation, the telework domain is established by the teleworker in a way that fits with their particular life circumstances. As a result, the teleworker and their manager operate two synchronous work relationships – the work relationship in the telework setting and the work relationship in the co-located setting. The dynamics found in the telework relationships in this study are related to the teleworker and their manager learning how to relate to each other within these dual work relationships.

At this juncture in the relationship it is critically important to note that expression of authority and autonomy behaviours as described are only legitimate in the telework domain. That is the manager and teleworker engage in stage 2 behaviours only when the teleworker is known to be operating in their specified telework domain, ie at a site away from the parent organisation (e.g. at home, etc.). Then again, when the teleworker re-enters the co-located setting, that is the organisation's own domain (eg, attend a team meeting, join in a company-sponsored social activity, etc.) both the teleworker and their manager need to readjust their work relationship behaviours to what was originally operating prior to the employee's moving into teleworking.

In effect, a dual work system has also come into being in stage 2. Within it the teleworker, now acting with autonomy, organises a personal work system suitable to their own work routine. As well the teleworker has also gained authority from their immediate manager to self-manage that system. This telework system – designated here as system one – promptly runs in parallel with the existing work system of the on-site organisation domain – designated now as system two.

The notion of a dual work system emerging in stage 2 is critical to understanding that the spotlight is now centred on the immediate manager's ability in sustaining the dual work system that has also come about at stage 2 of their work relationship. Here the manager needs to be able to shift in and out of managing the teleworker in the two work domains *depending upon which domain the teleworker is located at any particular point in time*. Management at stage 2 requires being able to shift from a managing mode that emphasises autonomy and authority behaviours in the telework domain, to a mode that emphasises already established behaviours associated with managing groups of subordinates (in which the teleworker is also embedded) within the on-site organisation domain. When the manager is able to successfully shift in and out of these modes the manager – teleworker relationship is then able to shift to stage 3.

The emergence of stage 3 is signalled by an emphasis on support behaviours by the manager. This stage of the work relationship is about making the dual work system public throughout the organisation in order to gain the endorsement of the work colleagues in the co-located setting. To fully appreciate all 3 stages in the development of the teleworker – manager relationship, it needs to be understood not just as a discrete relationship

particular to telework but rather in relation to the work relationships between the teleworker, their manager and in parallel with work colleagues in the co-located setting.

Overall, the grounded theory provides a useful starting point for further research on work relationships in telework settings. The notion of a dual work system provides an innovative way of explaining the dynamics that develop when an employee – manager work relationship moves into a telework setting. However, further research needs to be undertaken to develop the grounded theory model. In particular, more data needs to be collected to explicate the detail and ordering of the stage 3 work relationship. The concepts of the dual work system and the work relationship triad, that is, the work relationships between manager, teleworker and co-located colleagues, begin to address the complexity of work relationships in telework settings. Hopefully, these new conceptual tools will prove to be useful for better understanding work relationships in telework settings.

REFERENCES

- 6359.0 *Forms of Employment, Australia*. (2002). Australian Bureau of Statistics. Available: <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs%40.nsf/956c38...73/4a47364d2c342b2bca256c3200827b89!OpenDocument> [2003, 24 January].
- Abel, M. J. (1990). Experiences in an exploratory distributed organization. In J. Galegher & R. E. Kraut & C. Egido (Eds.), *Intellectual Teamwork* (pp. 489-510). New Jersey: LEA.
- Australian Centre for Industrial Relations Research and Training. (1999). *Australia at Work*. Sydney: Prentice Hall.
- Baba, M. L. (1999). Dangerous liaisons: Trust, distrust, and information technology in American work organizations. *Human Organization*, 58(3), 331-346.
- Bailyn, L. (1988). Freeing work from the constraints of location and time. *New Technology Work and Employment*, 3, 143-152.
- Baruch, Y. (2001). The status of research on teleworking and an agenda for future research. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 3(2), 113-129.
- Becker, F. D. (1986). Loosely-coupled settings: a strategy for computer-aided work decentralization. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 8, 199-231.
- Belson, D. (1994). *The Network Nation Revisited*. Available: [dbelson@web.cc.stevens-tech.edu](mailto:dbelson@web.cc.stevens-tech.edu) [1996, 30 September].
- Berry, S. (1996). Teleworking today. *Computing & Control Engineering Journal*, 7(1), 4-10.
- Bibby, A. (1997). *Offshore Information Processing in Barbados*. Available: <http://www.eclipse.co.uk/pens/bibby/barbados.html> 9/5/98 [1998, 9 May].
- Blanc, G. (1988). Telework: Present Situation and Future Development of a New Form of Work Organization. In W. B. Korte & S. Robinson & W. J. Steinle (Eds.), *Autonomy, telework and emerging cultural values* (pp. 189-200). Amsterdam: Elsevier.
- Breakspear, C. (Ed.). (1998). *From Juggling to Managing? The Evolution of Work and Family Policies in Three Australian Organisations*. Sydney: Industrial Relations Research Centre, UNSW.
- Brewer, A., & Hensher, D. (1998). Flexible work and travel behaviour. In P. J. Jackson & J. M. v. d. Wielen (Eds.), *Teleworking: International Perspectives. From Telecommuting to the Virtual Organisation* (pp. 215-232). London: Routledge.



- Brigham, M., & Corbett, M. (1996). *Trust and the virtual organisation: Handy ciberias*. Paper presented at the New International Perspectives on Telework: From Telecommuting to the Virtual Organisation, West London, UK.
- British Telecommunications. (1994). *Teleworking - BT's Inverness Experience*. Available: <http://www.labs.bt.com/innovate/telework/reports/contents/inver.htm> [1997, 2 October].
- Burns, J., & Otte, F. (1999). Implications of leader-member exchange theory and research for human resource development research. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 10(3), 225-238.
- Celente, G. (1995). Technotribalism. *Psychology Today*, 28, 37-?
- Commonwealth Public Service Union. (1994). *Homebased Teleworking: Telstra Implementation Procedure and Certified Agreement*. Canberra.
- Corcoran, M. (2001). India - Call Centres, *Foreign Correspondent, Series 10, Episode 41*: Australian Broadcasting Company.
- Cunningham, J. B. (1993). An overview of the action research process, *Action Research and Organizational Development* (pp. 67-90). Westport: Praeger.
- Daniels, K., Lamond, D., & Standen, P. (2000). *Managing Telework: Perspectives from Human Resource Management and Work Psychology*. London: Business Press.
- Davenport, T. (1995). Think Tank. *CIO*, 9(4), 36-38.
- Davidow, W. H., & Malone, M. S. (1992). *The Virtual Corporation*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Dawson, W., & Turner, J. (1989). *When She Goes to Work She Stays at Home*. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.
- Depickere, A. (1998). *Teleworking: between commitment and control*. Paper presented at the Third International Workshop on Telework, Turku, Finland.
- van Der Wielen, J., Taillieu, T., Poolman, J., & Zuilichem, J. (1994). Telework: dispersed organizational activity and new forms of spatial - temporal coordination and control. *Analise Psicologica*, 1(12), 103-116.
- DIR. (1996). *APS Home Based Interim Award A Resource Document*, (AGPS). Canberra: Department of Industrial Relations.
- Drucker, P. F. (1988). The coming of the new organization. *Harvard Business Review*(Jan-Feb), 45-53.
- DuBrin, A. J. (1991). Comparison of the job satisfaction and productivity of telecommuters versus in-house employees: a research note on work in progress. *Psychological Reports*, 68, 1223-1234.

- Eisenhardt, K. M. (1989). Building theories from case study research. *Academy of Management Review*, 14(4), 532-550.
- Fox, A. (1974). *Beyond Contract: Work, Power and Trust Relations*. London: Faber & Faber.
- Freeman, J. (1998, 25 June). Home Truths. *Sydney Morning Herald*, (Domain Supplement), pp. 6-8.
- Fulk, J., & DeSanctis, G. (1995). Electronic communication and changing organizational forms. *Organization Science*, 6(4), 337-349.
- Gabarro, J. (1978). The development of trust, influence, and expectations. In A. Athos & J. Gabarro (Eds.), *Interpersonal Behavior: Communication and Understanding in Relationships* (pp. 290-303). New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
- Gabarro, J. (1990). The Development of Working Relationships. In J. Galegher & R. E. Kraut & C. Egido (Eds.), *Intellectual Teamwork* (pp. 79-110). New Jersey: LEA.
- Gabarro, J., & Kotter, J. (1991). *Managing people and organizations*.
- Glesne, C. (1999). *Becoming Qualitative researchers*. New York: Addison Wesley Longman.
- Gordon, G. Available: <ftp://ftp.popco.com/pub/gilgordon/managers.txt> [1998, 18 July].
- Gummesson, E. (1991). *Qualitative Methods in Management Research*. Newbury Park: Sage.
- Hamblin, H. (1995). Employees perspectives on one dimension of labour flexibility: working at a distance. *Work Employment & Society*, 9(3), 473-498.
- Hamilton, C. (1987). Telecommuting. *Personnel Journal*(April), 91-101.
- Handy, C. (1995a). *The Age of Unreason*. London: Arrow.
- Handy, C. (1995b). Trust and the Virtual Organization. *Harvard Business Review*, 73(3), 40-50.
- Handy, S., & Mokhtarian, P. (1995). Planning for telecommuting: measurement and policy issues. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 61(1), 99-112.
- Harman, K., & Bordow, A. (1998, 1-4 September). *An exploration of teleworker-manager relationships*. Paper presented at the Teleworking Environments: Third International Workshop on Telework, Turku, Finland.
- Harrington, S., & Ruppel, C. (1999). Telecommuting: A test of trust, competing values, and relative advantage. *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication*, 42(4), 223-239.

- Henley Report. (1988). *Tomorrow's Workplace. Harnessing the Challenge of Teleworking*: The Henley Centre.
- Hinds, P., & Bailey, D. (2000). *Virtual team performance: modeling the impact of geographic and temporal virtuality*. Unpublished paper: Presented at a seminar at the School of Industrial Relations and Organisational Behaviour, UNSW, Sydney.
- Horner, D., & Day, P. (1995). Labour and the information society: trade union policies for teleworking. *Journal of Information Science*, 21(5), 333-341.
- Huws, U. (1988). Telework: Present Situation and Future Development of a New Form of Work Organization. In W. B. Korte & S. Robinson & W. J. Steinle (Eds.), *Remote possibilities: some difficulties in the analysis and quantification of telework in the UK* (pp. 61-75). Amsterdam: Elsevier.
- Huws, U., Korte, W. B., & Robinson, S. (1990). *Telework: Towards the Elusive Office*. Chichester: John Wiley.
- HYPIT Project. (1996). *Human and Organisational factors in telework*. Available: <http://www.doc.mmu.ac.uk/RESEARCH/MSc/azads/contenpg.htm> [1997, 15 January].
- Jackson, P. J., & van der Wielen, J. M. (1998). Actors, approaches and agendas: from telecommuting to the virtual organisation. In P. J. Jackson & J. M. van der Wielen (Eds.), *Teleworking: International Perspectives. From Telecommuting to the Virtual Organisation* (pp. 1-17). London: Routledge.
- Jarvenpaa, S. L., & Leidner, D. E. (1999). Communication and trust in global virtual teams. *Organization Science*, 10(6), 791-815.
- Johnson, R. B. (1998). Examining the validity structure of qualitative research. *Education*, 118(2).
- Johnston, P. (1995). *Telework '95*. Available: D:\Kerry\Thesis\Internet\European Research\telew95.htm.
- Judkins, P. E. (1988). Telework: Present Situation and Future Development of a New Form of Work Organization. In W. B. Korte & S. Robinson & W. J. Steinle (Eds.), *Towards new patterns of work* (pp. 33-37). Amsterdam: Elsevier.
- Kahn, W. A., & Kram, K. E. (1994). Authority at work: Internal models and their organizational consequences. *Academy of Management Review*, 19(1), 17-50.
- Keleher, M. E., & Filson, G. C. (1995). Towards new work arrangements: the case of telecommuting. *World Futures*, 44, 115-128.
- Kompass Australia 1998*. (1997). Prahran, Victoria: P. Isaacson Publications.

- Kugelmass, J. (1995). *Telecommuting. A Manager's Guide to Flexible Work Arrangements*. New York: Lexington.
- Kurland, N. B., & Bailey, D. E. (1999). Telework: the advantages and challenges of working here, there, anywhere, and anytime. *Organizational Dynamics*(Autumn), 53-68.
- Kvale, S. (1996). *InterViews*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Lafferty, G., & Whitehouse, G. (2000). Telework in Australia: findings from a national survey in selected industries. *Australian Bulletin of Labour*, 26(3), 236-252.
- Lee, J., & Jablin, F. M. (1995). Maintenance communication in superior-subordinate work relationships. *Human Communication Research*, 22(2), 220-257.
- Legge, K. (1995). *Human resource management: rhetorics and realities*. Houndmills: Macmillan.
- Lipnack, J., & Stamps, J. (1999). Virtual teams: the new way to work. *Strategy and Leadership*, 27(1), 14-19.
- Lonsdale, S. (1998). Goodbye pay packet. *Globe*, 3, 16-18.
- Lynch, T., & Skelton, S. (1995). Teleworking: a necessary change. *British Telecommunications Engineering*, 14, 122-130.
- Makridakis, S. (1995). The forthcoming information revolution: its impact on societies and firms. *Futures*, 27(8), 799-821.
- Martin, J. (1996). *Cybercorp*. New York: Amacom.
- McGrath, P., & Houlihan, M. (1998). Teleworking: International Perspectives. From Telecommuting to the Virtual Organisation, *Conceptualising telework: modern or postmodern?* (pp. 56-73). London: Routledge.
- McLoughlin, I., & Jackson, P. (1997). *Organisational learning and virtual technologies: towards a research agenda*. Available: <http://www.nedernet.nl/telework/amsterdam/a1e.htm> [1997, 8 September].
- Meyers, N., & Hearn, G. (2000). Communication and control. *Australian Journal of Communication*, 27(2), 39-63.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Mirchandani, K. (1999). Re-forming organisations. In P. Jackson (Ed.), *Virtual Working* (pp. 61-75). London: Routledge.
- Moffatt, A. (1998). Telecommuting -combining the powers of Information Technology and Telecommunications. Sydney.

- Nandhakumar, J. (1999). Virtual teams and lost proximity. In P. Jackson (Ed.), *Virtual Working* (pp. 46-56). London: Routledge.
- Nankervis, A., Compton, R., & McCarthy, T. (1999). *Strategic Human Resource Management*. Melbourne: Nelson.
- Newman, G. (1997, August 30). Dare to Hot Desk. *The Weekend Australian*, pp. 35.
- Nohria, N., & Eccles, R. G. (1992). Face-to-face: making network organizations work. In N. Nohria & R. G. Eccles (Eds.), *Networks and organizations* (pp. 288-308). Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
- Osborne, D. (1993). *Psychological Aspects of Teleworking in Rural Areas*. Available: <http://www.swan.ac.uk/psychology/patra/index.htm> [1997, 12 November].
- Olson, M. (1983). Remote office work: changing patterns in space and time. *Communications of the ACM*, 26, 182-187.
- Olson, M., & Primps, S. (1984). Working at home with computers: work and nonwork issues. *Journal of Social Issues*, 40(3), 97-112.
- Pagonis, J. (1995). The teleworking explosion: fact or fallacy? *Search*, 26(7), 203-204.
- Parkhe, A. (1993). "Messy" research, methodological predispositions, and theory development in international joint ventures. *Academy of Management Review*, 18(2), 227-268.
- Perin, C. (1991). The moral fabric of the office: panopticon discourse and schedule flexibilities. *Research of the Sociology of Organizations*, 8, 241-268.
- Perin, C. (1998). Teleworking: International Perspectives. From Telecommuting to the Virtual Organisation, *Work, space and time on the threshold of a new century* (pp. 40-55). London: Routledge.
- Perry, C., & Coote, L. (1994). *Processes of a case study research methodology: tools for management development?* Paper presented at the ANZAM '94 Conference, Wellington.
- Phizacklea, A., & Wolkowitz, C. (1995). *Homeworking Women*. London: Sage.
- Platt, L. (1995). *When Worlds Collide: Balancing Workplace, Family and Home*.
- Probert, B., & Wajcman, J. (1988). Technological change and the future of work. *Journal of Industrial Relations*, 43, 432-448.
- Ramsower, R. M. (1985). *Telecommuting: The Behavioral Effects of Working at Home*. Michigan: UMI Research.
- Reinsch, L. (1995). *Manager-employee relationships and telecommuting*.

- RTA. (1996). *RTA Teleworking Pilot Project 1993/94* (CRB95.031). Sydney: RTA.
- RTA. (1997). *NSW leads the way in flexible work practices*. Sydney: RTA.
- Schwarz, H., Nardi, B., & Whittaker, S. (1999, July 14-16). *The Hidden Work in Virtual Work*. Paper presented at the International Conference on Critical Management Studies, Manchester, UK.
- Skyrme, D. J. (1994). Flexible working: building a lean and responsive organisation. *Long Range Planning*, 27(5), 98-110.
- Snow, C. C., Miles, R. E., & Coleman Jr, H. J. (1992). Managing 21st Century Network Organizations. *Organizational Dynamics*(Winter), 5-20.
- Special Article - Casual employment (Jul, 1999)*. (1999). Australia Bureau of Statistics. Available:  
<http://www.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/abs%40.nsf/94713ad445ff1425ca2568000192af2/1d092d8f58d782b2ca2569de0021ed33!OpenDocument> [2003, January 24].
- Sproull, L., & Kiesler, S. (1991). *Connections: New Ways of Working in the Networked Organization*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Stace, D., & Dunphy, D. (1994). *Beyond the Boundaries*. Sydney: McGraw-Hill.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of Qualitative Research*. California: Sage.
- Tamrat, E., Vilkinas, T., & Warren, J. (1997). *Analysis of a telecommuting experience: a case study*. Adelaide: University of South Australia.
- Taylor, S. J., & Bogdan, R. (1998). *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods* (Third ed.). New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Teleworking*. (2002, 13/05/02). Australian Bureau of Statistics. Available:  
<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/0/A24E3...14A59CA256BD000268CBF?Open&Highlight=0,telework> [2003, 21 January].
- Teleworking: New South Wales*. (Report 1373.1)(2002). Sydney: Australian Bureau of Statistics.
- Tellis, W. (1997). Application of a case study methodology. *The Qualitative Report*, 3(3), available online at <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR3-3/tellis2.html>.
- Tippin, D. (1994). *Control processes in distance work situations: The case of satellite offices*. Paper presented at the The Annual Meeting of the Canadian Sociology and Anthropology Association, Calgary, Alberta.
- Toffler, A. (1980). *The Third Wave*. New York: Bantam.

- Tolbert, P., & Simons, T. (1997). *The impact of working from home on the career outcomes of professional employees*. Paper presented at the Second International Workshop in Telework, Amsterdam.
- Weijers, T., Meijer, R., & Spoelman, E. (1992). Telework remains "made to measure". *Futures*(December), 1048-1055.
- Weisenfeld, B. M., Raghuram, S., & Garud, R. (1999). Communication patterns as determinants of organizational identification in a virtual organization. *Organization Science*, 10(6), 777-790.
- Wellman, B., Salaff, J., Dimitrova, D., Garton, L., Gulia, M., & Haythornwaite, C. (1996). Computer networks as social networks: Collaborative work, telework, and virtual community. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 22, 213-238.
- Westpac. (1996). *Home Based Work*. Sydney: Westpac.
- Whitehouse, G., Diamond, C., & Lafferty, G. (2002). Assessing the benefits of telework: Australian case study evidence. *New Zealand Journal of Industrial Relations*, 27(3), 257-268.
- Who's who in business in Australia 1995*. (1994). Melbourne: Information Australia.
- Wood, J., Wallace, J., Zeffane, R., Schermerhorn, J., Hunt, J., & Osborn, R. (1998). *Organisational Behaviour*. Brisbane: John Wiley & Sons.
- Working from home. (1996). *Women & Work*, 17(1), 1-12.
- Yin, R. K. (1994). *Case Study Research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Zeytinoglu, I. (1994). *Employment conditions in telework: an experiment in Ontario*. Paper presented at the Proceedings of the Canadian Industrial Relations Association 30th Conference, Ottawa, Ontario.
- Zuboff, S. (1988). *In the Age of the Smart Machine*. Oxford: Heinemann.

## **Appendix A - Preliminary Interview Schedule - Human Resource Managers**

What were the reasons for [name of organisation] adopting home-based work?

Eg what advantages does it provide for the organisation (economic, social etc)

If flexibility is given as a reason, probe more – what does flexibility mean? Why is it needed?

History

When was home-based work first introduced?

What led up to the introduction of telework?

Who was involved in getting it up and running?

Did this person/group have much power in the organisation?

Were any others involved in the decision to adopt telework?

What was involved in the implementation?

How would you describe the culture of the organisation?

Is telework compatible with the existing culture?

Is telework similar to any other organisational innovations that have been introduced at [name of organisation]?

Is telework perceived as being difficult to implement? If so, why?

Is telework still being trialled?



Is home-based work available as an option to all employees? If not, who was it designed for? eg particular occupations or groups of employees (for example, women returning from parenting leave)

What have been the facilitating factors of home-based work in this organisation?  
eg reduced office costs, improved motivation, increased productivity, flexibility in working hours

What have been the constraints on home-based work in this organisation?  
eg barriers by management, employees, unions

Has [name of organisation] conducted an evaluation of its home-based work program?  
If so, what were the key findings?

How are the results of this innovation being communicated?

Have any issues arisen with the introduction of home-based work that require further research?

What are the future plans for [name of organisation] regarding home-based work?

Do you know of other organisations or government departments using home-based work?

Would [name of organisation] be interested in participating in this research? For example, this might involve an evaluation of the current working from home program.

**Preliminary interview schedule - teleworkers**

**CONFIDENTIAL**

TELEWORKING INTERVIEWS

Name:

Age:

Interview Date:

Organisation:

Occupation:

Describe your main duties:

Do you work F/T or P/T?

Duration of employment with this organisation:

Current teleworking arrangement ie no. of days working in the main office and no. of days working from home:

How long have you been in the current teleworking arrangement?

Why have you become a teleworker?

Who was involved in organising your teleworking arrangements?

- You
- Your Manager
- Human Resources
- Others

Does the company have any policy and procedure on teleworking?

ISSUES?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of teleworking?

Prompts -

- autonomy
- flexibility
- social contact/isolation
- affect on other family members
- career advancement

ISSUES?

Has teleworking changed the way your work is organised?

Prompts -

- hours of work - more flexible
- control/loss of control
- teamwork
- communication (formal and informal) - manager, co-workers and subordinates
- technology used and impact (eg has it extended your network?)

ISSUES?

What aspects of your working arrangements would you like to see changed?

Do you intend to telework for a set period of time or is the arrangement indefinite?

Any questions or points you would like to raise?

## **Appendix B - Interview guide for Managers**

1. What job do you do?
2. How long have you been with this organisation?
3. How long have you been managing (a) teleworker/s?
4. How were you introduced to the concept of telework?
5. Why did you decide to use this type of work arrangement with some of your employees?
6. Were there any difficulties when people first commenced teleworking?
7. How did you work through these difficulties?
8. Did changes have to be made when people started teleworking?
9. How different is it managing teleworkers to onsite workers?
10. Do you like managing people remotely? Why? How could it be improved?
11. How is telework perceived in this department? In this organisation? What are your ideas on this?
12. How important do you think it is for workers to be physically present in the office?
13. How important is trust in a telework arrangement? How was trust developed between you and the teleworker/s?
14. What have been the key issues that have arisen since you started managing (a) teleworker/s?

### **Interview guide for Teleworkers**

1. What job do you do?
2. How long have you been with this organisation?
3. How long have you been teleworking?
4. How did you find out about teleworking?
5. Why did you decide to start teleworking?
6. Could you describe to me the way your telework arrangement was negotiated?

7. Were there any difficulties when you first commenced teleworking?
8. How did you work through these difficulties?
9. What do you like about teleworking?
10. Did starting telework affect the way you do your job? How? Why?
11. Does your manager know what work you do at home?
12. Do you like being managed in this way? Why? How could it be improved?
13. How is telework viewed by people in the organisation?
14. How important do you think it is to be physically present in the office?
15. What have been the key issues for you since you started teleworking?

**Appendix C – Advertisement**

**ARE YOU A  
TELEWORKER ?**

For more information please go to  
<http://www1.tpgi.com.au/users/kerryh/>  
or call Kerry Harman on 02 4955-0151

**DO YOU MANAGE  
TELEWORKERS ?**

# Welcome homework

By Gary Bentley

**W**HEN it comes to telecommuting, researcher Kerry Harman believes there is more being said than done.

Also known as telework and home-based work, telecommuting involves an employee working from home, linked to the workplace through telecommunications and computer technology such as a personal computer and a modem.

'There has been an extensive amount of research undertaken over the last decade which examines the costs and benefits of introducing telework into an organisation,' Ms Harman said.

'The literature indicates that the benefits of increased employee flexibility, productivity and satisfaction seem to outweigh the costs of setting up telework programs.

'Telework may even provide partial solutions to broader social problems such as unemployment in regional areas of Australia, including the Hunter.'

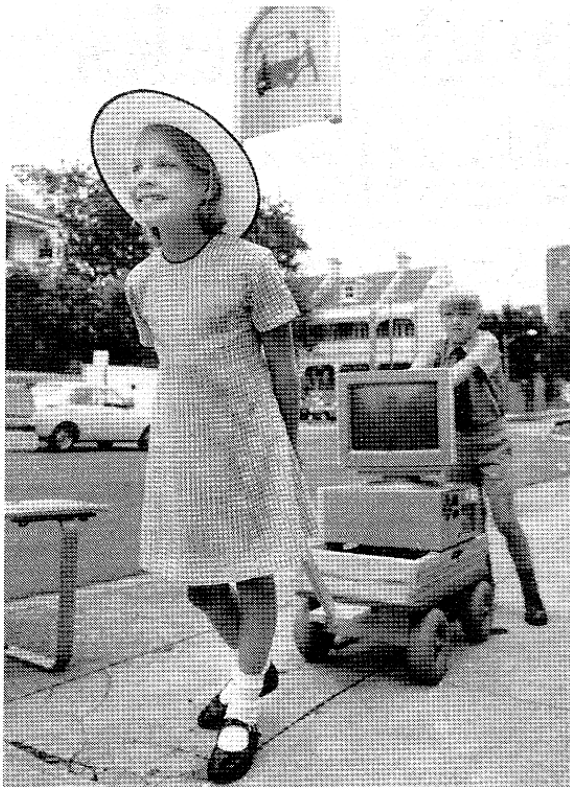
Ms Harman said much of the research had been conducted in the US and Europe where telework appeared to be a more established practice.

'However, there have been telework trials undertaken in Australia. The Roads and Traffic Authority and the Commonwealth Public Service are better-known examples.'

Working from suburban Newcastle, Ms Harman's research work has so far taken the better part of two years.

She tutors on a casual basis at the University of NSW and is completing a Master's Degree in organisational theory.

While there has been extensive research on the costs and



The future: Computers could mean the end of office work

benefits of introducing telework, there has been little investigation into the development of remote working relationships.

And that is the focus of Ms Harman's research.

Along the way there have been interviews with human resources managers at large organisations with telework programs in place.

Now comes the time to talk to teleworkers and their managers about their experiences.

'There could be a lot of smaller organisations using this particular work arrangement and they're the ones I'd

now like to reach.'

Ms Harman will present a paper on her research at the Third International Conference on Telework in Finland in September.

The conference will provide the opportunity for in-depth discussion of key contemporary issues in teleworking and virtual organisations by researchers, academics, practitioners and policy-makers.

If you are a teleworker or manage a teleworker and you are interested in discussing your experiences, Kerry Harman can be contacted on (02) 4955 0151.

5  
e  
3  
1  
0  
v  
d  
s  
h  
V  
h  
e  
n  
e  
i  
e  
r  
ct  
in  
7.  
ly

## Business Diary

## **Appendix E - Email questions - manager**

In the last 2 weeks did any incidents occur in the course of your dealings with [name of teleworker]? If so, please briefly describe.

Start typing your answer here:

Did this incident influence your management of [name of teleworker]? If so, in what manner?

Answer:

During the last 2 weeks have you received any feedback from [name of teleworker] regarding work?

Answer:

If yes, how was this information communicated to you?

Answer:

How important was this information for you at the time?

Answer:

How did you deal with this information?

Answer:

Did any problems occur in working with [name of teleworker] during the last weeks?

Answer:

If so, were you able to solve the problem at the time?

Answer:

Were you satisfied with the solution? Describe why or why not.

Answer:

### **Email questions – teleworker**

In the last 2 weeks did any incidents occur in the course of your teleworking activity? If so, please briefly describe.

Start typing your answer here:

Did this incident influence your work performance? If so, in what manner?

Answer:

During the last 2 weeks have you received any feedback from [name of manager] regarding your work?

Answer:

If yes, how was this information communicated to you?

Answer:

How important was this information for you at the time?

Answer:

How did you deal with this information?

Answer:

Did any problems occur in your work during the last 2 weeks?

Answer:

If so, were you able to solve the problem at the time?

Answer:

Were you satisfied with the solution? Describe why or why not.

Answer:



## **Appendix F - Description of the monthly face-to-face meetings compiled by Anne, Leanne and Jennifer**

Our monthly meetings tend to follow a similar agenda:

1. Management Update
2. Guest Speaker
3. Idea's / Issue Form
4. New Business

Management Update:

Anne always gives an update from her weekly Management meetings. This includes any Organisation changes / new developments that will effect us. Updates on current projects or projects in the pipeline that have been passed for commencement by the steering committee.

Guest Speaker:

Anne normally invites a guest speaker from within the Organisation. This gives us an opportunity to meet this guest speaker (face-to-face), if they are new to the organisation; it always helps to put a face to a name. They might have heard of us, or been on a conference call meetings with us as part of our team based projects. The guest speaker would give a brief talk on what role their department plays in the organisation and any new developments within their department. This would also give us an opportunity to ask any questions we may have.

Idea's / Issue Form:

Anne has created an "Idea's / Issue form" within our department. We are encouraged to fill out this form and sent it to Anne. Anne presents the Idea's/ Issue forms which have been lodged. We discuss the idea as a group and if we believe the idea has merit we discuss how this idea can be put into practice. Anne then adds this idea to the "IT Implementation Group Idea's / Issue Log", so we can keep an idea on its implementation progress.

New Business:

Anne always encourages us to raise any new business at our monthly meetings. This gives everyone an opportunity to raise an issue or query with the group as a whole. Everyone can then answer the query or have a group discussion on the matter.

Other topics added to the monthly meetings from time to time:

Apart from these standard topics at the monthly meeting, if any team member has completed a project during the month, they would give a presentation on this project, including handouts with examples of the project. This is a great idea, as we are all working on different projects at the same time, its always hard to keep up with all the changes being implemented. After listening to the presentation, we have the opportunity to ask questions. This is also a great starting point for cross training.

Department processes:

We sometime use the opportunity of having the group together at our monthly meetings, to go over our departments processes. This may include a brain storming session on how we can improve existing processes as a group or develop new processes.

Planning:

Sometimes Anne will be required to discuss specific tests that will be happening during the next month. An example of one specific test would be “Disaster Recovery testing”. This type of testing is a one off that Anne needs to raise with us. It was important that the group discuss the testing approach that will be taken, and get input from us. From this discussion, a plan of action would be established including resources.

Feedback “Giving / receiving”:

Anne doesn't wait for a monthly meeting to pass on feedback to anyone in the IT Implementation Group. Feedback on a task is passed onto an Individual immediately via memo or verbally. If Anne needs to give us feedback as a group, she might raise this at our monthly meeting, when we are all present.

General comments on our monthly meetings:

Leanne & I use the monthly meetings as a chance to catch up with everyone in the group. I believe it has been an important bonding process for all the team members. Not only has it given Anne, Leanne & me a chance to build a relationship up, but also each member of the group.

We also have a lunch together after our monthly meetings. Anne also invites two guests from within the organisation to join us for lunch. This also gives us an opportunity to meet other people from within the organisation, or if we do know these people a chance to catch up with them on a social level. Leanne & I look forward to our trip to the office each month now, it is always an enjoyable and informative day.

## Appendix G - Work Relationships and Performance

At one of the group interviews Tania, Rebecca and Greg made a list on butcher's paper of features in their work relationship that enabled them to perform their job more effectively.

Table 6-1 What aspects of your work relationship do you think are important to help you perform your job more effectively?

Rebecca	Tania	Greg
Open & honest relationships	Being trusted and treated with respect	Trust – honesty
Level of trust & understanding	Being given scope to make own decisions	Competence
Working towards a common goal & all appreciating the common goals	Feeling comfortable about being able to suggest changes (improvements) or discuss 'issues'	Organisation
Accessibility/knowing how to 'get to people' & being able to acquire feedback	Being able to choose own training	Communication – open – direct
Respect for Greg's time/anticipating the questions/background information before broaching subject/acquiring feedback	Greg always making himself available (somehow-by phone, email etc)	Commitment [to organisation]
Opinions/research skills/problem solving/anticipated questions/both sides of argument	Overall, we have a good working relationship, based on mutual respect and trust. As an employee I get the feeling that my work is of value and that I make an important contribution to Research Inc.. We have very intense workloads at times, when we know we can have our space respected or pull together as a team, but also manage to incorporate fun and friendship.	Innovative
Due consideration of ideas/opinions		Entrepreneurial