Chapter 5 – Research Methodology

5.0 Introduction

This chapter will set out the methodology utilised within this thesis. During this chapter, references to previous methodologies used within telework and psychological contract research will be briefly reviewed to provide context to the research strategy; then the case will be made for utilising a qualitative methodology over quantitative or mixed methods, before exploring the research paradigm in greater detail. The sample will be described alongside explaining the purposive snowball sampling approach. The qualitative analysis approach – thematic template analysis – will be explained before finally presenting the ethical procedures that were put in place to protect study participants.

5.1 Previous Research Methods in Telework Research and Psychological Contract Research

Telework research has been investigated through a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods. Notable studies from Morganson et al. (2010) and Golden (2012) used large scale surveying methods, whilst Sullivan (2001) and Hilbrecht (2008, 2013) favoured qualitative methods, specifically semi-structured interviews. The advantage of semi-structured interviews for understanding telework is that the researcher has the opportunity to explore the mental processes of a teleworker with greater depth, which is pertinent given researcher concerns about teleworker work-life balance and isolation (Crosbie and Moore, 2004; Hilbrecht, 2008; Kurland and Bailey, 1999; Sullivan, 2001; Tremblay, 2002; Vega, Anderson and Kaplan, 2014; Wells, 1997). Furthermore, quantitative methods appear to be more prevalent and applicable when measuring the effectiveness of telework from an organizational standpoint when, for example, considering productivity as a dependent

variable. This is not the thrust of the current thesis where the concern is primarily on employee well-being (Harker, Martin and MacDonnell, 2012).

In psychological contract research, qualitative methods are conspicuous in their absence from a great deal of research. This is puzzling as qualitative methods provide a good fit when analysing the process of the psychological contract. However, perhaps few qualitative studies reflect that the psychological contract is often not treated like a process at all, but rather as a far more simplistic cause-effect relation (Conway and Briner, 2005).

Regarding the method of collecting information on the psychological contract and obligations between family members, semi-structured interviews can be used to obtain more detailed information about family life, which can be quite intricate and nuanced. Such complex information is not well collected using cross sectional surveys (the most common method used to research psychological contracts), as they do not capture time effectively and require reducing information to short response Likert scales. Conway and Briner (2005) note that the tendency toward using quantitative survey methods to assess the psychological contract has led to gaps in understanding. They note that the exchange-based process of the psychological contract can be hard to grasp via these methods, so in this thesis, a less rigid research method will be used to provide further insight.

5.2 Research Strategy and Procedure

The research questions in this thesis call for a sample of teleworkers that can provide rich data and unpack the complexities of the psychological contract. The research strategy will also need to navigate the interplay of actors from the domains of work and home, alongside the further complication of the role of technology and how this may mediate communication between participants and their organizations and families. With these factors in mind, the case for employing a qualitative methodology will be put forward.

5.2.1 Rationale for Qualitative Methods

Qualitative research is concerned with analysing the sentiment of words (as text in diary entries, or as talk in semi-structured interviews, for example) and their meaning over numbers and statistics, encompassing a range of techniques as well as being a type of

research paradigm (Braun and Clarke, 2013), which will be discussed later in this chapter. Initially, the appropriateness of a qualitative methodology for the current thesis will be assessed.

When selecting research methods, the complexity of the topic and the framework used to explain it must complement one another. In this case, teleworking provides a complex topic, regarded as multi-faceted with contradictory findings, both on its effectiveness as a means of working and as a lifestyle choice (Boell, Cecez-Kecmanovic and Campbell, 2016). In conjunction, the framework of the psychological contract is also a complex arrangement of beliefs, promises, expectations and obligations, all of which take place as a process over time. Judged by the complexities contained within this thesis, a qualitative procedure provides a better proposition for examining the meaning and arrangement of these constructs, whereas quantitative research tends to assume constructs and relationships can simply be measured. Qualitative research offers more flexibility during data collection, the ability to probe complex constructs to ascertain their sense, and explore participants' experience in more detail through conversation. However, this added depth often comes at the cost of researching a smaller sample.

Furthermore, research that considers the psychological contract of teleworkers is very sparse, therefore a qualitative approach is a better fit to explore the data than a quantitative approach. Where the current body of research is insufficient, a more exploratory method is required, one where the researcher can learn from participants, rather than test them against fixed hypotheses (Creswell, 2012). Interviewing participants can help researchers examine participant understandings, ambiguities, and contradictions they have regarding the terminology used within psychological contract literature, terms such as promises, expectations and obligations. Most pertinent to the current research is the notion of obligations. Obligations are phenomena open to interpretation and may require a back and forth interview conversation to extract meaningful data. It is in these situations that the role played by the researcher is key to the richness and quality of the data. When the researcher is part of the data collection process, this guides the paradigm of the research toward a constructionist approach where the input of the researcher is not seen as unwelcome, but instead accepted as an inevitable part of the research process (King, 2004). This emphasises the interview as a social interaction between researcher and

participant that necessarily comes with its own power-geometries (Oakley, 1981). This marks a departure from conceptualisations of the research process as an exercise in objectivism, removed from the realities of social life.

The positioning of the researcher in the current research must be considered. The researcher, a man without children aged 29 at time of interviewing does not directly resonate with the largest proportion of the study - parents aged over 40 (See table 5.2 or Appendix 4). Positioning of the researcher as slightly 'othered' to the majority of respondents could result in very clear and open dialogue, where the participant is at pains to explain their experience to someone that may not understand, or equally lead to stilted conversation where nuances are potentially misinterpreted (Milligan, 2016; Song and Parker, 1995). From the researcher's own reflection he felt that participants across the sample were open and honest during the interview process, but this is of course subjective.

The next section of this methodology chapter will further discuss the paradigm that the researcher will be operating within and how it relates to the method of data collection.

5.3. Research Paradigm

The research paradigm is essentially the fundamental philosophy and societal attitude of the research. The research paradigm shapes how the research will be conducted and how the researcher will operate within the data collection process based upon their ontological and epistemological positioning (Ponterotto, 2005).

5.3.1 Ontology

Ontology is concerned with the existence of things and to what extent they are independent of our understanding of them. This produces a continuum from the purely objective reality (objectivism), where everything exists independent of our perception, to a purely subjective reality (constructionism), where things are dependent on our perception of them; there are many additional viewpoints in between these two extremes (Jonassen, 1981; Fleetwood, 2005). Where the researcher stands on this subject will affect not only how they see the world, but how they go about researching the things within it.

The researcher on this project believes that there are certain undeniable truths in the physical world, but that most of the social interactions that make up what they would term as the 'felt' world are constructed by those within it. This viewpoint leads the researcher away from objectivism and toward a constructionist stance.

Furthermore, the ever-changing revisions that exists in a constructionist world (Bryman and Bell, 2001) lend themselves to the key concepts of this thesis. Telework, technology and the psychological contract are all compatible with a constructionist paradigm for the following reasons. Telework operates in a flexible and continually evolving state, technology spans distances instantly and breaks down rigid hierarchies of knowledge and communication. Whereas the psychological contract acts as a process of negotiation, where this ongoing negotiation leads to continual revision of what obligations are sensed in a relationship, similar to Strauss' (1973) early constructionist study of the interrelations in a psychiatric hospital. Strauss believed that ongoing experiences affected psychiatric patients and static diagnostic tools were not able to access patients as well as a flexible model. This matches the ongoing processes experienced in teleworker psychological contract negotiations and provides a malleable viewpoint from which to observe teleworker behaviour.

5.3.2 Epistemology

Although often linked to a researcher's ontology, a researcher's epistemology is inextricably interwoven within their pre-understanding of the world around them (Johnson and Duberley, 2000) and is concerned with how our experiences, mixed with these preconceptions, influence our accepted knowledge of things (King, 2004). Similar to ontology, epistemology uses a continuum from a purely provable and discoverable world and all the data within it at the objective end, to a purely subjective reality where an individual's understanding of the world is dependent on what they have already experienced.

Along the aforementioned continuum there are a number of notable viewpoints, some of the most influential will be presented in table 5.1:

Epistemology	**Rationale**	**Features**
Positivism	There is an underlying and irrefutable truth to be found. The researcher sits outside of the process and remains independent of it.	Hypotheses to be tested, quantitative method that provide statistical proof for generalisable theory.
Post-Positivism	Adapted from positivism, still believes in the objective truth, but accepts that human conjecture plays its part and is open to investigation.	Hypotheses to be tested, quantitative method that provide statistical proof for generalisable theory.
Interpretivism	Reality is a social construct and truths within it as subjective based on the individual. The researcher has a part to play in the observations.	Open research questions, qualitative methods, building theory form the ground up, not concerned with generalisability.
Critical Realism	Recognise the significance of constructed meaning, but believe that these social actions take place within constraining pre-determined social structures.	Mixed methods, quantitative or qualitative.
Relativism	There is no absolute truth, every reality is owned by that individual.	Open qualitative methods, oral histories, ethnographies.

Table 5.1 Selected Epistemologies

Linking to the researcher's ontological position, this research will adopt an interpretivist viewpoint. Interpretivism covers a range of positions with human interpretation as the basis on which to build knowledge (Prasad, 2005, cited in Duberley, Johnson and Cassell, 2012). The offshoot of ethnomethodology, put forth by Garfinkel (1967) with its focus on everyday social interactions is particularly pertinent to the researcher of the current study, who believes them to be of the utmost importance when trying to understand people and generate knowledge of their actions and experiences.

Working with a constructionist-interpretivist paradigm helps to guide the qualitative approach put forward for data collection. This approach will allow the participants to open up about their experiences whilst allowing the researcher to engage fully in the interviewing process, where the researcher's biases and values can be reflected upon in terms of how they have shaped the research process.

With the practical method of data collection and the philosophical paradigm of the research established, the crucial matter of ethical considerations for the study will be assessed.

5.4 Ethical Procedures

Ethical considerations are paramount when conducting research to ensure the safety and confidentiality of the research participants (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004). To ensure the data collection in the thesis adheres to these ethics the research was conducted within the guidelines set out by Royal Holloway University of London ethical guidelines and the internal approval process passed the project without ethical issue.

The safety of participants and the protection of their mental well-being was of utmost importance throughout the data collection process. Prior to beginning piloting the project, the research discussed the interview guide with their supervisor to flag any ethical concerns. It was flagged that the research will include discussion around topics that may be sensitive, such as ability to parent and examining stressful periods of the participants' lives.

To safeguard participants, it was requested that they read the information and consent form (Appendix 2), the researcher would then verbally remind the participant before the start of the interview that they could withdraw from the interview at any point. If the researcher encountered distress from the participant, they had prepared a protocol to deal with such situations - participants would be given ample time to organise their thoughts and regain personal control in between questions as recommended by Mitchell and Irvine (2018). Thankfully, these instances were rare, and at no point during the data collection process did participants appear unduly upset or under stress.

All personal data from the interview recordings were anonymised during the transcription process and all data was kept on password protected computers or password protected

cloud storage. This included names of participants, names of family members, company names and any other factors that would cause probable recognition of the participant from reading their quotations within the thesis. The information and consent form were also securely stored by the researcher. Digital versions were filed in a password protected folder (in addition to the aforementioned password protection) and paper copies kept in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's home.

With the alignment of ethical concerns completed, the sample to be investigated can be addressed as well as the processes put in place to ensure its applicability and reliability.

5.5 Sample

This section will cover details on how the sample for the project was collected, who was recruited and what measures were put in place to ensure high quality results would be forthcoming from the sample.

5.5.1 Sample Criteria and Justification

To extract meaningful data on the teleworking experience, it was decided that participants would be required to meet the following criteria: first, they regularly work from both their home and their central work space; second, use communications technology to connect themselves with the organization when working remotely, and third, share their home with others whom they consider family. The rest of this section will be dedicated to how these decisions were formulated and how the purposive sample was created.

The **first essential criteria for participants is to regularly work from both their home and their central work space** was informed by the need to evaluate the specific experience of a teleworker rather than another type of employee or home worker. The characteristics of who could take part in the study raised a number of questions around what it takes to be counted as a teleworker. This issue is discussed at length in section 2.3 of this thesis and the first check to be made is whether the sample fits within the working definition presented in section 2.4. Once that has been confirmed, the search must be focused to a degree as not to make the sample too diverse to the point the findings cannot be focused upon teleworkers. Daniels, Lamond and Standen (2001) argue that to be included in a teleworking sample, the

individual would only need to work a fraction of their time away from the office (deemed home-based, remote office or nomadic) and requiring the use of some form of ICT to complete their out of office tasks.

In practice, when a participant offered their services to the study, the researcher screened them with a few questions around their job role and working pattern to ensure they had understood the requirements in the project brief. They were also asked how often they worked from home, and due to the fluidity of teleworking arrangements, these answers were not always clear. The researcher then made a judgement call on whether they regularly teleworked. Judging this criterion to be an individual that had a track record of working from home relatively scarcely, but for a number of years, or with higher frequency but less tenure. In addition, the more remote workers were required to visit their central working space at least once per month. The frequency in which participants from the current research teleworked varied within the bounds of 'regularly', and full details can be found in column seven of the table labelled Appendix 4.

Daniels, Lamond and Standen (2001) go on to propose that telework frequency, combined with three other variables (knowledge intensity, intra-organizational contact and extra-organizational contact) and place the individual somewhere on a teleworking grid which can predict the type of teleworking job. For example, a home-based, highly knowledgeable individual with high ICT usage, high intra and extra-organizational contact would be in public relations. Whereas a nomadic individual with low knowledge intensity, low ICT and intra-organizational contact, but high extra organizational contact would be a delivery driver – both these workers, despite disparate roles, would be considered teleworkers. If considering a sample, this broad umbrella of teleworking is clearly too diverse, therefore it would be difficult to extrapolate meaningful data from a group which combines such varied working experiences. Instead, the approach taken was to focus the data collection toward participants that fitted into specific areas of Daniels, Lamond and Standen's typology. See the following table for more examples:

Location	*ICT usage*	*High knowledge intensity*				*Low knowledge intensity*			
		Intra-organizational contact *High*		*Low*		*Intra-organizational contact* *High*		*Low*	
		Extra-organizational contact		*Extra-organizational contact*		*Extra-organizational contact*		*Extra-organizational contact*	
		High	*Low*	*High*	*Low*	*High*	*Low*	*High*	*Low*
Home-based	Low ICT usage	Sales managers	Management accountant	Lawyer	Translator	Phone operator	Bookkeeper	Phone sales	Proofreader
	High ICT usage	Public relations	Programmer	Financial analyst	IS developer	Customer enquiries	Secretarial/ clerical	Market research	Data processing
Remote office	Low ICT usage	Sales managers	Management accountant	Lawyer	Translator	Phone operator	Bookkeeper	Phone sales	Proofreader
	High ICT usage	Public relations	Programmer	Financial analyst	IS developer	Customer enquiries	Secretarial/ clerical	Market research	Data processing
Nomadic	Low ICT usage	Sales managers	Internal management consultant	Community nurse	Architect	Service persons	Bookkeeper	Sales representative	Proofreader
	High ICT usage	Engineer	Internal IT consultant	Auditor	IS developer	Service persons	Secretarial/ clerical	Delivery staff	Data processing

Table 5.2 Types of telework and sample jobs (p. 1,157, Daniels, Lamond and Standen, 2001)

In line with the first criterion, individuals falling in to the category of remote office workers would not be considered for the study. These individuals essentially work in two or more different offices, their work colleagues may change, but the experience is similar, the main difference being commute duration. In the current thesis, the interaction with those within the home is crucial.

For the group known as nomadic workers, similar issues are raised, but their inclusion would be determined on their sub-group. For example, those with low intra-organizational contact *and* low ICT usage may not produce meaningful enough relationships with their managers to create interactions to be worthwhile, they act almost as contractors, barely connected to the organization in person or virtually. Furthermore, those who work in delivery jobs, low level sales jobs, etc, may lack the level of managerial interaction desirable for a study on complex interpersonal interactions. Nomadic staff who have high knowledge ICT usage, coupled with high intra-organizational contact would be suitable across knowledge intensities. As with nomadic staff, home-based staff with high ICT usage and intra-organizational would form a suitable part of the sample, again, all the way across the knowledge intensity scale. Therefore, **a high amount of interconnectedness with the organization via ICT is the second essential criteria for inclusion in the sample.** Ensuring the participants met this requirement was confirmed by asking participants their ICT usage prior to interview.

The job role of each participant of the current research can be found in column four of the table labelled Appendix 4.

The **teleworker's home sharing situation is the third essential criteria for inclusion in the sample,** ensuring the ability to successfully answer the research questions around dual obligations, the teleworker must have a significant other or others in the home environment. Previous research from Lapierre and Allen (2006) showed that home sharers have a great influence on the experience of the teleworker. Generally, telework increased the incidence of family life interfering with work, as teleworkers were obliged to take part in family activities during working time. However, home-sharers that actively provided 'instrumental assistance' in relieving workers from family duties eased levels of work-home conflict. Furthermore, in a rare case of research focusing on the teleworkers' spouse, Giovanis (2018) sought female only data from 1991-2009 in the British Household Panel Survey to compare happiness of spouses of teleworkers and non-teleworkers. Key to this study was the amount of household chores picked up by the working husbands in the study, considerably more in the teleworking sample, suggesting the teleworkers are obligated contribute more when in the home environment.

These studies show that the role played by the home-sharer is more than a static one and more research to understand this interplay, particularly on the under-researched notion of teleworker obligations, is needed. Although obligations take many forms, and one may be obligated to their own needs or that of a dependent (including children, recipients of care, and even pets (Hilbrecht et al., 2008; Junça-Silva, Almeida and Gomes,2022). For this sample, the obligations in the home domain should be of sufficient complexity to mirror those put upon the teleworker by their work demands.

Therefore, a participant in this sample needed to share their home with:

A) their romantic partner/spouse and children/dependents

B) their romantic partner

C) their children/dependents

D) other family members i.e. parents, siblings

This list is comprised in order of the most preferable situations and grounded in good probability that sufficient numbers of participants from the sample will meet the criteria. Furthermore, those who telework are more likely to fit into categories A and C than B and D (Chung and van der Horst, 2018).

To compare this list of home sharing criteria to the sample shown in Table 5.3, 51.2% (N = 21) of participants fell into category A, 34.1% (N = 14) into B, 2.4% (N = 1) into C and 12.2% (N = 5) into D. This spread of participants shows a reasonable attempt to ensure the quality and relevance of the data collected. The home sharers of each participant of the current research can be found in column nine of the sample table.

It is noted that there was only one single parent within the sample, so for purposes of the latter analysis the categories were reorganised. Categories A and C merged into 'parents' category B was named 'partners' and category D renamed as 'junior family members'. The group that each participant of the current research were categorised into can be found in column ten of the table labelled Appendix 4.

To conclude, the sampling criteria for the thesis consisted of teleworkers who regularly spend at least one day per week working in their home; when they work remotely they are in contact with their organization via communications technology and they must share their home environment with other people significant to them, as defined above. In the rare instance that a potential participant did not match the required criteria, in any of the three examples discussed, their participation was politely declined. Beyond the sense checking employed in the purposive sampling criteria, qualitative methodology must consider a range of further measures to ensure the quality of research which will be thoroughly covered in the next section.

5.5.2 Quality Criteria

Measuring quality in qualitative research is a topic more contested than with the comparable tests that are made in quantitative studies. Propositions have been made to assess all scientific research along quantitative measures of reliability and validity (Corbin and Strauss, 2015) or by reworking the terms away from their strict statistical nature. Golafshani (2003) sees trustworthiness, rigor and quality as the key indicators of validity and

reliability in qualitative methods whilst Creswell and Miller (2000) construct a framework by which validity is cross-referenced against the position of the individual (researcher, participant or external) with their epistemological viewpoint to produce validity measures.

However, a broad range of research points to the redundancy of these terms in qualitative research (Guba and Lincoln, 1989; Lincoln, 1995; Symon and Cassell, 2012; Tracy, 2010). Within the current research, quality criteria will be borrowed from Lincoln (1995) and related to the researcher's constructionist approach to create specific quality criteria.

Firstly, pinpointing quality criteria from a constructionist epistemology can be challenging due to its ethereal perspective upon reality (Madill, Jordan and Shirley, 2000). This being said, the researcher feels that the following steps outlined by Lincoln (1995) constitute a reasonable and applicable set of criteria for a constructionist research.

Secondly, the researcher has explicitly used elements of Lincoln's 1995 'authenticity' criteria:

- The **standard of voice** which involved giving voice to participants, even if they were contradictory. Examples of this are evident throughout the findings chapters.
- The **standard of sharing** where benefits of the research will be shared with participants. The researcher has committed to sharing their findings with each participant and has remained in contact with some participants and is willing to share their knowledge and findings from the research to enhance the participant's or indeed the participant's organizations implementation of telework.
- The **standard of reciprocity** where mutuality is understood to exist between he researcher and their participants. Throughout the study the researcher understood that they had unescapable influence on the process of data collection by their very existence in the process. This being said, the researcher refrained from deliberately leading participants in any way.

To some extent the researcher also applied the **standard of community.** This is questionable as the teleworkers came from different backgrounds and were not a homogenous community, but were bandied by their teleworking status, a group that the researcher has tried to represent authentically.

Thirdly, beyond these measures, other practical steps were taken to improve the research quality, such as a pilot study (See section 5.6.2) (Gudmundsdottir and Brock-Utne, 2010) and turning to advice from the researcher's supervisory team (Cypress, 2017).

Finally, it must be considered that the aforementioned criteria are not exhaustive or in any sense 'complete'. For instance, the researcher only applies half of Lincoln' 1995 criteria. However, as attested by Symon and Cassell (2012), attempting to strictly apply an entire range of quality criteria lists may stifle the ability of the researcher, overwhelmed by the expectations set before them. To this end the authors go on to posit that an element of trust must be imbibed by the reader in the researcher it the same may one trusts the rigor of quantitative equations.

With the aforementioned actions in place to aid the quality of research, this chapter will begin to examine further the workings of the semi-structured interviews conducted.

5.5.3 Sampling Method and Sample Source

The sample for this research project took elements of purposive and snowball sampling to exceed the target sample size of 40 and arrive at a sample size of N = 41, with 42 interviews, as one participant's account was spread across two sessions. The decision to end data collection at this point was taken due to the researcher deeming that saturation had been reached. Saturation in qualitative research refers to the point in which the meaningful data extracted from participants become similar enough to a point where the researcher does not believe continuing the data collection process would garner further discovery (Mason, 2010). From interview 32 onwards the amount of new codes being created from the participants' interviews began to slow. The researcher remained cognisant of the temptation to 'lean into' this trend to bring the data collection to a close by narrowing the research questions to new participants. However, with no overt pressing deadline to conclude the interview process and a desire to achieve good academic rigour, the researcher ensured all remaining interviews were as open as the ones that had preceded them. With the final interviewees' account of their experience being the longest of all participants (in fact split into two sessions), still yielding no new areas for coding and in line with Richards (2015) the researcher deemed that the achievable 'breadth' of the data collection had been reached. Knowing when the saturation point will be reached is difficult

to decipher and will always amount to a judgement call by the researcher. Mason's 2010 meta-analysis had shown 31 interviewees was the mean standard to reach saturation and this in combination with the aforementioned processes left the researcher content that saturation had been reached within the sample.

Originally, the research project looked to secure a reasonably homogeneous sample, akin to a case study, from one or several local government authorities across London. This was partly reasoned by the fact that local government authorities have been extensively used in previous academia (Irani et al., 2005; Weerakkody, Jones and Olsen, 2006) and partly due to a perceived point of access recognised by the researcher into the organization. However, due to decision making from human resources at the local authorities that the researcher was not privy to, the research proposal was rejected.

Whilst researching alternative case study locations, the researcher began to conduct ad hoc interviews with acquaintances and associates, originally for piloting purposes. Whilst conducting these pilots, the researcher began requesting participants to suggest further teleworkers and to advertise the research to their organizations and contacts. As this progressed, the research began to amass a heterogenous sample of teleworkers that complied with the research sample requirements, primarily, working from home on a regular basis and sharing that home with someone they consider family. From here, the researcher discontinued their search for a case study organization and put their efforts into cultivating a successful sample using snowballing combined with purposive selection. Snowballing involves the researcher requesting that participants 'spread the word' about the researcher and request that any suitable individuals known to the participant contact the researcher to take part in the study (Byrne, 2001). One effect of snowball sampling was that some clustering of participants occurred. In two instances there were two participants from the same organization, in one of these clusters a manager and employee. There was one other cluster of eleven participants from one very large organization, four of whom worked in the same department, with the other seven spread around other areas of the organization. Although the more densely clustered participants are in research, the less generalisable the finding (Sharma, 2017), the researcher attempted to balance out the clustered participants with many diverse individual participants. In addition, the clustered participants did vary somewhat in job role and their teleworking experiences had significant

differences as well as similarities. Clusters involving managers and their employees did present the opportunity to study a psychological contract from the viewpoint of both parties, however, doing so in the writeup of this PhD could have had implications for anonymity. For instance, content that was shared by an employee on their interactions with their manager could have been deciphered quite easily if the quotations from participants had been linked. Therefore, analysis of this type was not attempted. A full run down of which participants were and were not from clusters is available in column eleven of Appendix 4 which summarises sample characteristics.

Also known as judgment samples, purposive samples are used by researchers when they know their participants need to have certain experience or a selection of traits key to what is being investigated by the researcher (Etikan, Musa and Alkassim, 2016). Purposive samples can be seen as an alternative to convenience samples which lack some of the unbiased rigour that allows for the extrapolation of generalisable results (Price, 2013). However, there is substantial argument for the merits of some functions associated with traditional convenience sampling. From a practical standpoint, convenience samples are applicable for this PhD research due to the constraints of time and budget that come with the production of a thesis. Furthermore, Jager, Putnick and Bornstein (2017) suggest findings from homogenous convenience samples provide a good level of generalisability. However, as this sample is heterogeneous, there is a need to move the convenience sample to a purposive one, this was done by producing a list of necessary criteria that the participants needed to meet in order to be considered for the research and making these known at the point of advertisement to take part. By doing so, this adds the ability to recruit participants that share key characteristics needed for applicability to the research, whilst allowing for a variance in gender, age, job role, profession and so on. This is echoed by Rivera (2018) who ascertain purposive sampling as a good alternative to probability sampling when operating within restrictive parameters, such as those found in the scale and timing of a PhD thesis. Furthermore, the concept of generalisability is questioned by Guba and Lincoln (1989), who exchange the term with transferability – the notion that instead of assuming to proport the findings into any context, if enough detail of the current case is included, the reader can make up their own mind on how applicable it is (Symon and Cassell, 2012).

Beyond the spread of the researcher's own social network and the snowballed participants, social media was employed to recruit individuals from the Surrey region. By utilising local residents' groups on Facebook, the researcher was able to appeal to a wide range of potential teleworkers at a location favourable to their base in Staines-Upon-Thames. This allowed for face to face interviewing to be readily enacted in addition to interviewing via video conferencing or telephone. The downside of social media as a recruitment tool would be the exclusion of individuals that are not active on these platforms. However, there is no reason to believe that the use of social media is of detriment to a participant's inclusion in the study. A summary of the sample makeup can be found in Table 5.3 and a full version of participants and their characteristics in Appendix 4.

Age	Average	**40.3**						
Gender	Male	**23**	Female	**18**				
Sector	Public	**14**	Private	**27**				
Managerial Level	Managers	**18**	Other Roles	**23**				
Participant Group	Parent	**21**	Partner	**15**	Junior Family Member	**5**		
Telework Frequency	Home Focused	**5**	Balanced	**24**	Office Focused	**10**	Varied	**2**
Interview Location	Their Home	**7**	Their Workplace	**8**	Neutral Place	**18**	Virtual Meeting/Tele-phone	**8**

Table 5.3 Summary of participant features

Beyond these measures, other practical steps were taken to improve quality of data collection, such as a reflexive pilot study (See section 5.5.2) (Gudmundsdottir and Brock-Utne, 2010) and turning to advice from the researcher's supervisory team (Cypress, 2017). With these actions in place to aid the quality of research, this chapter will begin to examine further the workings of the semi-structured interviews conducted.

5.6 Interview Protocol

Semi-structured interviews were chosen for the research because they simultaneously facilitated the exploration of themes and details that would be beyond the reach of surveys or prescribed and repeated fixed interviews where the same questions are asked in the same order without elaboration, whilst avoiding the potentially rambling nature and impracticality of unstructured interviews (Dunn, 2005). Semi-structured interviews allow for the best of both worlds, defined by Longhurst (2003) as *"…a verbal interchange where one person, the interviewer, attempts to elicit information from another person by asking questions. Although the interviewer prepares a list of predetermined questions, semi-structured interviews unfold in a conversational manner offering participants the chance to explore issues they feel are important."* (p. 103).

In this case, the researcher had an interview guide or 'crib sheet' in front of them to ensure the key points relevant to the research questions are covered (Appendix 1). Beyond this, the researcher did not attempt to rigidly follow a set of questions. The 'crib sheet' was updated regularly based on the feel and progress of past interviews, where questions that yielded little or no response were reworked. As the interviews continued, the researcher became less reliant on the crib sheet, though referred to it at the end of each interview to ensure good coverage of the research questions had been made.

At the beginning of the interview the researcher explained to the participant the meaning of being a teleworker and their key characteristics in the current operational definition used in this thesis. This ensured that the participant resonated with this description and confirmed their eligibility to take part. This was an additional safeguard as the researcher had already vetted potential participants prior to progressing them to interview.

During the interviews, the participants were encouraged to relay their own story. In doing so, the researcher allowed participants to elaborate on issues they found important throughout the interviews, with the researcher guiding participants back to the main themes of the study. The rationale behind this is to allow the participant to feel comfortable during the interview process, as participants who are comfortable during the process are likely to release richer and more detailed data (Dearnley, 2005).

In contrast, if one were to strictly adhere to a set of questions, this could be detrimental to the flow of the interview, taking the participant out of their comfort zone by chopping and changing the topic, rather than following the lead of the participant's discourse. When applying the semi-structured interview technique, follow-up questions become key to investigating emerging themes and the deeper meanings behind what the participant has disclosed. Themes are defined by King and Horrocks (2010) as *"…recurrent and distinctive features of participants' accounts, characterising particular perceptions and/or experiences, which the researcher sees as relevant to the research question"* (p. 150). Simple follow-up questions such as 'How did this affect you?', 'What did you do next?' and 'What would you rather had happened?' help to probe participants to narrate their experiences and understandings of those experiences.

At all points during the interviews, the researcher tried to remain friendly and open throughout the interview, owing to the importance of building rapport with participants to ensure the interview process is as comfortable as possible, whilst aiding the researcher to feel confident in conducting the interview. Building rapport in interviews is an essential part of the researcher's toolkit; the importance is emphasised by research on the effects of interview rapport in the investigative/criminal setting (Collins, Lincoln, and Frank, 2002; Caproni, 2008). King, Horrocks and Brooks (2018) note rapport building to be a somewhat mercurial practice, but do note that it is essentially about raising the levels of trust in the interviewer-interviewee relationship. It is hoped that increased trust will lead to participants feeling more comfortable and in turn being more open when answering questions. Furthermore, to sustain the positive effects of rapport, it must be maintained throughout the interview process, beyond initial openings to interviews (Walsh and Bull, 2012). With the aforementioned points on rapport building in mind, the researcher looked to actively engage in rapport building throughout the interview process. This included making regular eye contact with participants (when interviewing in person), following tangential discussion not directly relevant to the research questions and enjoying laughs and jokes with participants.

In terms of interview location, telephone interviews accounted for nearly 20% of the sample. For participants that could not meet for in person interviews, the option of virtual interviews was offered, but proved unpopular. Only one interview began on Skype, but the

participant's internet connection was poor and this was also switched to a telephone call. It has been suggested that telephone interviews are not preferential for researching complex topics (Harvey, 1988). However, later comparisons of face to face and telephone interview data from Sturges and Hanrahan (2004) found no discernible difference in quality. In addition to some of the aforementioned rapport building techniques used in face to face interviews of the current study, the researcher applied recommendations from previous research to help ensure the quality of the telephone interviews. These included checking participants were in an environment where they were free to talk, allowing participants plenty of time to answer questions and not filling silences, probing answers that were unclear (sometimes due to a lack of physical representations, i.e. hand gestures) and using orienting statements (such as 'We are about halfway through' or 'We are going to start the section on well-being') to guide the participant through the interview (Block and Erskine, 2012; Drabble et al., 2016; Farooq, 2015).

5.6.1 Interview Guide

To address the research questions, the semi-structured interviewing required suitable planning to cover the correct topics. Interviews began with an introduction and rapport building through 'small talk' before asking the participant to read through and sign the consent form (Appendix 2) and discuss its content if required. In addition, the researcher confirmed that the participant was happy to have the interview audio recorded. Participants who were interviewed by telephone or virtual meetings were emailed a signed copy of the consent form prior to the interview. It is worth noting here that the consent form details to participants that:

"To help create a better understanding of teleworking I will be using a concept called the psychological contract." (Consent form, Appendix 2)

This is the only priming participants would have received on the psychological contract, but may explain why some participants explicitly reference the concept during interview and will be shown in some participant quotations in the findings chapter of this thesis.

The researcher began the main interview with a selection of simple, broad questions on the participant's telework arrangements, allowing the participant to ease into the interview

process and the researcher to ask additional funnel and laddering questions to obtain more specific details and understandings (Braun and Clarke, 2013). This also facilitated as an opportunity to double check that the participant was a suitable fit for the research project. As the interview developed the researcher guided the conversation to include questions on participants' obligations to work, family and partners and how these relationships are maintained, and the role technology played in their daily lives. Again, this line of questioning also provided feedback to the researcher as to the participants suitability. Throughout the data collection process all participants did meet the required demographics to take part (see section 5.5.1 for the necessary criteria to participate). The exact path that the interviews followed varied from participant to participant, but the researcher ensured these main topics were covered with the help of the interview guide (Appendix 1), which has a list of the pertinent questions to be asked, that could be glanced upon during the interview process. Heeding the advice of Walsh and Bull (2012) the interviews were interspersed at regular intervals with rapport building, or indeed maintaining conversation.

5.6.2 Piloting

Piloting of the interview process took place with three participants that were known to the researcher. Piloting is essential to a successful research project as it allows the researcher to test the appropriateness of their research materials, and by reflecting upon the results of the pilot study, the researcher can revise their approach accordingly (Sampson, 2004).

The small pilot sample for this study attempted to fulfil these requirements. The pilot participant's details, featuring pseudonyms, were as follows:

1. Pilot participant 1 (Sandra) - a female private sector worker in her fifties who teleworks from home twice a week, sharing her home with her husband and their teenage son.

2. Pilot participant 2 (Manni) - a male a private sector worker in his twenties who teleworks from home between two and three times per week, living at home with his parents and a sibling.

3. Pilot participant 3 (Trevor) - a male government worker in his fifties who usually teleworks from home two full weeks at a time, followed by a week or two with four

days in the office and one at home, he also teleworks from the train while travelling. While he is teleworking from home he lives with his wife and when working in the office (300 miles from home) he stays with his grown-up daughter and partner outside office hours.

Participant 1 was interviewed in a neutral meeting place without significance to either party, participant 2 was interviewed over the phone and participant 3 was interviewed in their home.

Upon interview it became apparent that participant 1 and 2 were both in fact contractors, and appeared somewhat disconnected from their employers:

> *"I schedule everything myself, choose my own hours, everything – then I just bill them"* (Sandra, Systems Consultant, 53)

> *"I work with different people all the time on client sites, it's difficult to build a relationship, I'm in and out all the time"* (Manni, IT Consultant, 24)

Particularly transactional in their interactions with the clients they work for on a project by project basis was Sandra, as a self-employed contractor she was very regimented in her time keeping, clocking off at set times and never going beyond her agreed hours, whether or not she was working from home or at a client site. Manni, although employed by his company, was 'farmed out' to work with other organizations and this distanced him from creating a particularly relational psychological contract with his main employer.

Psychological contract interactions, which so often centre on implicit or nuanced interactions, appeared to be muted from the contractor participants. This, coupled with their transactional attitude to obligations, caused the researcher to exclude contractors as participants to the study. This being said, Millward (1999) did successfully collect meaningful psychological contract data from participants who were subcontracted to organizations, equal to that of directly employed workers: *"contrary to expectation, no significant differences were found between employees and permanently employed agency contractors in how relational they viewed their terms of employment. These two groups were comparable in terms of emotional investment, perceptions of equity and of opportunities for*

professional development." (p. 266, Millward, 1999). However, on balance, the researcher decided to exclude contractors from the sample.

When reflecting on the quality of the first two pilot interviews against the third from Trevor, who was not a contractor, the data appeared far richer and more detailed, particularly in areas where the previous interviews were lacking, for example relationships built with line managers. Therefore, the researcher deemed that the third pilot interview with Trevor was of sufficient quality to be included in the main sample.

In addition to helping guide the selection of future participants, the piloting process helped the researcher in several ways. Firstly, the pilots were approached with a skeletal interview guide which covered the main themes associated with the research, this was then developed through the pilot participants' responses and through reflection by the researcher after each pilot interview concluded. Secondly, the researcher was able to develop their interviewing technique without concern that their inexperience in interviewing would hamper the data quality of the main sample. Finally, the opportunity to improve both the interview guide content and interviewing technique helped improve the confidence of the researcher in their interview questions and ability. For instance, pilot participants appeared somewhat put off by the promissory terminology traditionally used in exploration or the psychological contract (Rousseau, 1989; Herriot, Manning and Kidd, 1997; Conway and Briner, 2005). Many sentences headed into dead ends, needs for clarification were requested, looks and expressions of confusion were made and a clear sense that participants were being removed from a natural, flowing conversation on their working experience and into a contrived interview was noted. Tweaking of the interview guide to follow Conway and Briner's (2005) suggested exploration of expectations and obligations as the focus of the psychological contract produced marked improvement in conversation flow and crucially in extraction of meaningful discussion on working experience and relationships.

The improvements made to the sample selection criteria, interview guide and researcher competency are all well reflected in research of piloting in PhD methodology (Ismail, Kinchin and Edwards, 2018), further proving their usefulness when attempting to undertake high quality research.

5.6.3 Interview Locations and Timings

Interviewing of the main sample took place across seven months from August 2019 to January 2020 and was therefore conducted prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. This is important to note as the pandemic had a significant effect on teleworking practices and proliferation. The locations for the interviews predominately in Surrey and London. The researcher looked to interview three to four participants per day when at their office environment and two to three per day if travelling to their home spaces or neutral meeting areas. Although some previous research denotes that the place where the research is conducted has a bearing on results (Selwood and Martin, 2000; Herzog, 2005), for practicality, the researcher believed they should be flexible on where the research took place to maximise their ability to garner the requisite amount of responses. Despite the interviews being scheduled to last around one hour for the feasibility to fit more than four interviews in one day, the researcher wished to avoid fatigue during the interview process as this can have a detrimental impact on the quality of the research. Furthermore, the researcher allowed time to write up initial thoughts and case summaries before the next interview took place (King and Brooks, 2017).

Interviewing of the main sample progressed smoothly, the researcher appeared to create good connections with participants who often stayed on to chat informally after the end of the recorded section of the interview, which suggests that they felt at ease. The researcher continued to tweak their interview guide through the interviews, often reflecting on notes made immediately after interviews, encapsulating the idea of continuous improvement within the research (Gillham, 2005). This process begins to bridge the gap from data collection to data analysis, of which the choice of method will now be discussed.

5.7 Qualitative Data Analysis Techniques

Within qualitative data analysis there are several routes to transforming the raw data, in this instance interview transcripts, into a form that addresses the research questions. Table 5.5 briefly summarises some of the main analytic perspectives available:

Qualitative Analytic Approaches	Description
Thematic Analysis	Thematic analysis extracts or creates themes from data and looks to create implicit meaning from them through a coding process. This process can be rigid or reflexive.
Discourse Analysis	By stretching the language used by the participant to look beyond the individual sentences and understand more deeply the use of language in relation to society.
Grounded Theory	The process of inducing a theory from the data collected without prior influence of existing preconceptions.
Narrative Analysis	Takes the view that participants present 'storied' accounts of themselves which are influences by the context of their own lives.
Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)	Focuses on how the individual makes sense of their experience, normally one of personal importance, in a certain context.

Table 5.5 Analysis options (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996; Taylor, Bogdan and DeVault, 2015).

In regards to choosing the correct umbrella analytical approach the researcher considered three criteria to ensure a good fit. Firstly, the approach needed to resonate with the researcher's ontological and epistemological position, in this case a constructionist ontology with an interpretivism epistemology – both of which are applicable to all of these qualitative methods. Secondly, it would need to be appropriate for the research being undertaken. This ruled out IPA as the research would look into many small elements of one's personal and work life, rather than significant events. Grounded theory was also dismissed as the researcher did have some pre-prepared research questions to investigate. However, thematic analysis has previously been found suitable to analysing both telework and the psychological contract (Herriot, Manning and Kidd, 1997; Major, Verive and Joice, 2008). Thematic types of analysis are also particularly insightful when trying to understand thoughts, behaviours and experiences. These themes then provide meaning by understanding how they appear and interrelate (Kiger and Varpio, 2020). Finally, it would need to connect on a personal level with the researcher's innate preferences, for which discourse analysis did not appeal as the researcher was by no means a linguist, however thematic analysis and narrative analysis resounded. Both of these options were considered,

but it was the range of options contained within thematic analysis which helped finalise the decision. The options within thematic analysis will now be considered.

5.7.1 Types of Thematic Analysis

All types of thematic analysis have two main components: defining themes that are of importance to the research and organising these themes into a structure of codes that shows the relationships between them (King and Brooks, 2017). Beyond this, there are a handful of techniques that can be applied to the process and although thematic analysis is not strictly tied to any one ontological or epistemological stand point, they do have different structuring and a range of nuanced differences (Braun and Clarke, 2015). The three main types of thematic analysis and their associated methods are outlined in table 5.6.

Type of Thematic Analysis	Description	Methods of Analysis with Description
Coding Reliability	Designated as a small q (q standing for qualitative) approach, it employs rigour from quantitative methods to the qualitative field. This means often finding deductive themes, attempts to remove bias and limit researcher participation in interviewing and has ideally at least two coders for cross referencing.	**Content Analysis** The verbal content is categorised into connotations which are positive, negative and so on, to form classifications of the data and test the predicted deductive outcomes.
Reflexive	A big Q (qualitative throughout) approach orientated around researcher involvement, 'organic' coding and an inductive, flexible method of creating themes. Bias is not strictly controlled for as the process is subjective and interpretive.	**Reflexive Thematic Analysis** As described in the column to the left.
Codebook	Sometimes referred to as 'medium q', this method has some prior deductive structuring, but also allows for reflexivity during data collection and analysis.	**Template Analysis** *A priori* coding allows researchers to begin with a set of codes they deduce will be relevant, but allows for reflexivity by adapting the codebook throughout data collection. The analysis is built on hierarchies of themes supported by sub-codes. **Framework Analysis** A subset set of techniques where data is sifted and charted, usually the data goes through the following steps: familiarisation, indexing, charting, mapping and interpretation. **Matrix Analysis** Looks to create a series of matrices that show connections between participants and themes.

Table 5.5 Types of thematic analysis (Adapted from Braun and Clarke, 2019; 2021)

Thematic analyses can be defined between deductive (coding reliability) and inductive methods (reflexive), when often in reality they are actually a combination of both (Braun and Clarke, 2021) and this approach is most apparent in template analysis (See Table 5.7 to see how this applied in this thesis).

Some other advantages of template analysis include its agreeableness across a number of ontological perspectives, its flexibility during the analysis process and the level of detail attainable during the coding process. Template analysis is also a better fit for the interpretivist epistemology of the project when compared to content analysis, which often

reduces qualitative data into small scale quantitative data once coded. Whereas template analysis retains more meaning from the data in line with an interpretivist viewpoint.

With the analytical technique decided, the practical process of transforming interviews into data began. In this thesis, the researcher transcribed the initial interviews without assistance, and to speed up the process for later interviews enlisted computer software, namely Otter AI and outsourced to a transcription service company. This resulted in roughly half the interviews being transcribed by the researcher and half by using the software and professional transcribers. Having hands on experience of transcribing the interviews unaided whilst still in the interviewing phase helped to familiarise the researcher with the data collection process, aiding the development and improvement of later interviews. Template analysis was then applied to the transcripts throughout the data collection process using NVivo 12 and subsequently NVivo 13 computer software.

The following section will describe template analysis, justify its selection in this thesis and review some notable previous applications of template analysis to organizational research.

5.7.1 Template Analysis

Template analysis typically comprises seven steps, listed below. It is crucial to acknowledge that these steps do not form an entirely linear progression. During template analysis steps are revisited and refined to improve the understanding of the content and quality of the coding.

1. Familiarization – Getting to know your data before any coding takes place. Typically, by reading through transcripts multiple times and listening repeatedly to audio data.
2. Preliminary Coding – Noting excerpts that could be relevant to answering the research questions, highlighting striking responses within the data or ascertaining points that resonate with *a priori* themes (theoretical themes created by the researcher before beginning data collection). Preliminary coding normally takes place on a subset of data collected early in the process.
3. Clustering – Taking *a priori* and emergent themes together and clustering them into meaningful groupings. This is where themes begin to be grouped in a hierarchical fashion, broader themes spanning over more focused or nuanced themes. For example:

A. Use of work technology at home

B. Use of work smartphone at home

C. Use of work smartphone out of working hours at home

4. Producing the Initial Template – The formation of the initial clusters of themes, all sorted hierarchically.
5. Developing the Template – The template is now transposed onto further transcripts of data. The suitability and unsuitability of the template helps to reform and reposition the coded themes. Modification of the template during this stage is key to the quality of the research.
6. Applying the Final Template – Once significant changes to the template have ceased, this version is applied across the rest of the transcript data. This template will account for the interpretation of the data.
7. Writing Up – The final template assists with the presentation of the analysis found within the thesis.

(Adapted from King and Brooks, 2017)

Once the template construction is complete the themes with high relevance to the research questions, high frequency and potential theoretical importance are prioritised in the process of extracting the findings (King and Brooks, 2017). Most connections between themes were identified through the clustering and hierarchical coding processes and, although there is an option to engage another form of analysis known as 'qualitative pluralism' (Frost et al., 2010), the researcher found these instances infrequent and was able to build these connections into the findings section of the thesis without running a new analysis.

The research selected template as the best process for making sense of the thesis data as it offers a flexible method of analysis which can also go into great detail. Through the hierarchical ordering of themes, broad topics can be drilled down through multiple levels, typically four or five, although the levels are not curtailed for any reason other than when there is no useful reason to further sub-categorise a topic (King and Brooks, 2017). This felt particularly pertinent to the current research as topics within the thesis, most notably the psychological contract have many level to explore (See Figure 5.8.)

Template analysis has been successfully used by qualitative researchers for over thirty years since being first described as 'template style' by (Crabtree and Miller, 1992) and features, although not extensively, in previous research directly aimed at the themes of the current research, namely telework (Collins and Hislop, 2016; Hislop, 2007; Richardson, 2010) and the psychological contract (Cassar and Briner, 2009; Parzefall and Jacqueline, 2011; Nadin and Williams, 2012). With template analysis having prevalence, although not prominence, in the main areas of research for this thesis, suggests good applicability whilst remaining relatively novel. The project therefore offers additional research to a potential gap in previous methodological processes for these topics.

5.7.2 A priori Themes

As noted previously, *a priori* themes are initial themes set out in template analysis prior to considering interview data. These themes are, depending upon one's epistemology, formed from the researcher's personal thoughts and experiences or drawn from findings in previous literature. In this thesis the latter was used to inform *a priori* themes.

A priori themes can be found on a continuum, from soft to hard, where a soft *a priori* theme may be rather vague in its description, whilst a hard theme will be more specific (King and Brooks, 2017). Hard themes are usually strongly grounded in previous theory and well defined, while softer *a priori* themes maybe based on the researcher's hunch or viewpoint (King and Brooks, 2017). The research questions from the current study also helped to guide the creation of *a priori* themes which were on the harder end of the continuum, forming some of the umbrella themes for which sub-themes can congregate below. Some *a priori* examples are shown in Table 5.6.

Area of Research	*a priori* Theme	Derived from the Research Of
Telework	Work-life conflict	Tremblay, 2002 and Hilbrecht et al., 2008
Telework	Improved work-life balance	Kurland and Bailey, 1999 and Maruyama, Hopkinson and James, 2016
Psychological contract	Psychological contract breach	Robinson and Rousseau, 1994 and Conway and Briner, 2002
Psychological contract	Psychological contract violation	Robinson and Rousseau, 1994; Chrobot-Mason, 2003; Pate, Martin and McGoldrick, 2003
Technology	Technology causing blurring of work-life boundary	Mazmanian, Orlikowski and Yates, 2005; Middleton, 2007; 2008 and Derks et al., 2016

Table 5.6 The use of some *a priori* themes within the current research project.

A priori themes are particularly useful when starting a research project as they act as the 'bones' upon which coding can be built. However, it should be remembered that reflexivity plays an important role within template analysis, so although the likelihood is that the *a priori* themes will occur, if they do not fit within the raw data findings, the researcher must be willing to remove or edit these themes (King and Brooks, 2017). It is this flexibility that allows *a priori* coding and inductive coding to work in harmony rather than in competition. The researcher found it intuitive to work with both types of code and inductive sub-codes naturally developed from *a priori* themes. Note table 5.7 where some *a priori* themes spurred inductive sub-codes. Throughout the project there were no examples of *a priori* sub-coding, this helped to prevent too many assumptions being made around the data before it was analysed.

With some *a priori* themes identified, and the fundamentals of template analysis understood, the interview data analysis process can begin in earnest.

5.7.3 Analysis Process

Initially, the coding of transcripts was planned to be done by hand on paper, as in the early stage of coding it is easier to formulate the first themes when able to quickly flick through paper and annotate by hand. However, in practice, the researcher did not find this process added much value to the analysis while at the same time proving very time consuming, so this was discontinued early in the analysis process. Other analogue methods were retained in the analysis and proved very useful, such as organising themes with Post-It notes and mapping connections by hand on A1 sheets of paper. Early clustering of themes can be easily achieved with the use of large paper sheets and post-it notes (Appendix 3), this enabled fluidity in adjusting the hierarchies of themes (King and Brooks, 2017).

Once the initial coding and theme formulation had taken place, analysis shifted to NVivo 12 (later in the process NVivo13). NVivo is a popular type of CAQDAS (Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software) which assists with the coding process, allowing text to be marked-up, catalogued and securely saved. Although it must be noted that NVivo does not analyse the data for the research in the same way a program like SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) does for quantitative data, it does provide great benefits for a researcher who is willing to put the time into learning how to best use the software (Zamawe, 2015). The aforementioned analogue processes were repeated in conjunction with the NVivo analysis, helping to aid revision of themes as well as offer a birds-eye perspective on the project, as this distance can be easily lost when viewing the project solely through qualitative data analysis software (Gilbert, 2002).

Table 5.7 shows how coding develops through both *a priori* and inductive means, displaying a selection of codes, sub-codes and verbatim examples found within. Some further examples of template development used in the project are shown in Figures 5.1 and 5.2.

Code	*A priori?*	Example Quote	Refined Sub-Code	Example Quote
Autonomy	No	*"It works for what you want it to be, gives you freedom, I feel a lot of my friends from Uni are in roles that are very supervised. I've got friends that have to clock in and clock out and you feel you have responsibility for your own work, which I like."*	Autonomy for availability	*"They're expecting me to be present mentally, to be managing my time and to have a very clear view of what I'm actually accountable for delivering in that period. So, it can't be fluid. You need to do it safely within the policy of the business, and in a way that isn't affecting your teammates in a negative way."*
Culture	No	*I've worked in two big financial institutions really in my career, and one of them was very almost alpha male dominated in terms of how people acted and made demands. I think it was seen to be a powerful thing to be doing, in terms of having your team online for longer, or you were seen to be doing the right thing to be responding at 11 o'clock at night, etc. You know, the company I'm at now is far more diverse in a number of ways, but one of those is respecting your personal time and understanding that your happiness in life and outside of work will contribute to you doing a better job in work, so to speak. So, I think it's been a wider culture within the organization, that's what probably drives that the most.*	> Workplace Environment > Economies of Agglomeration*	*My manager and I would often talk about something called economies of agglomeration. Okay, so that's the benefit of having people next to each other and it's the intangible benefits of inspiration, corridor conversations, morale, and fluidity of communication that actually just improves how effective you are as a team. We live in a world where it's not uncommon for any of us as senior leaders to be on eight hours of Skype calls in a single day… you can't sense body language, you can't sense whether everyone is feeling like their opinion is being expressed.*
Role at home	Yes	*So, both people, both think that they're doing more than they are. So, I'd probably say I'm doing a lot of some stuff, but if you asked my wife she'd be, like, "Nah." So, I do think in terms of general stuff I tend to do the shopping, I do a bit of cooking.*	Parenting > Co-parenting*	*With regards to my son I would say we have an equal partnership in how we raise him, so it's not just me.*

Table 5.7 Breakdown and development of codes and sub-codes

Trust	No	*To be honest, it's the ability just to, or the flexibility to say, right, I need to work from home tomorrow, or just ring up on the day and say, for one reason or another, I'm going to work from home today… I think it's a trust thing and, obviously, my line manager has to trust that I am actually working and equally, I fully support the fact that I know I've got to be working while I'm at home, and so I do. As I say, it's a trust thing and fortunately he trusts me. Whereas, as I said, with the previous boss there was no trust at all, trust had broken down completely.*	Mistrust > Unfairness > Glass ceiling*	*Somebody I work with got promoted and she's a great example for that [breaking the 'glass ceiling']. So, we have this conversation regularly. So, she's, sort of, my age [40], she's got three kids, she's a director. So, she's made her way up – all the way up – to the top of the firm, and she works from home. She works part time and she works from home, so she's in the office only one day a week. It took her 20 years to get there, but, you know, she's made it work for her, and I think she's a fantastic example for, you know, other women in the firm. So, I know six/seven years ago I was talking to other women, and, basically, the only women in the firm that were successful were women who didn't have children, and they basically pushed on until they got to director, and then they were, like, "I want to have kids now." It's, like, 'Yeah, but you're, like, nearly 40, you know, it's not going to be easy now'. She's actually not really, thought career first, she's thought family first, career will just happen, and she was lucky that she had a supportive boss that allowed her to do that.*

Table 5.7 Breakdown and development of codes and sub-codes cont.

Well-Being	Yes	*I think flexible working is very important in today's environment, we've got a lot of technology at our fingertips that actually enables people to work more from home, if they need to. I think more companies need to be on board with that. You know, as you mentioned earlier about wellness, lots of businesses talk about wellness for their staff and the importance of it, yet they're not always in tune with the flexibility.*	Well-Being X conflicting obligations‡	*For me, well-being is also about my commute and having that downtime. Sometimes, if I need to get away, for me I recognise that wellbeing and I go to the cinema and watching a film so that I literally shut off. That's, kind of, my meditation, I'm not able to think of anything else when I'm at the cinema. It [teleworking] helps because it allows me to do my hobbies and see the children for the work/life balance. But, I'd say I'm more productive in the office, I mean, the technology is here, the people are here, it's just easier to focus and move things forward in the office. So, I'd say for career satisfaction and wellbeing about where I'm going in life working from home doesn't work.*
Work-Life Conflict	Yes	*I've felt the kind of you know, like ah is she [his wife] expecting me to be available? So, she'll come from home from work and she'll expect me to, you know, stop working at that point. So, Yeah, I've felt that pressure*	Low conflict	*I always work more than nine to six, nine to five. So that's for sure. I think it's more in your own discipline rather than kind of fixed hours and actually at home I can shut the door I can have my own office which I don't have in the office and I think it's training your home, you know your people you cohabitate with, training them to respect your privacy respect the door which is shut. I think that everyone is now kind of understanding that they need to knock and if, you knock, and I say no, because I'm on the call or doing something important. So, I think everyone is kind of on the same wavelength here.*

* The > symbol notes that the example is from a further progressed sub-code.

‡ The X in this code name denotes crossing or a combination of these sentiments.

Table 5.7 Breakdown and development of codes and sub-codes cont.

This initial template shows the coding of obligations after one complete round of analysis:

- Obligations

-- Obligations to home

-- Obligations to work

-- Fulfilled obligations

-- Unfulfilled/difficult obligations

Figure 5.1 Template of 'obligations'

Obligations was a *a priori* theme and after one round of coding a basic linear structure had been reached. The final template for obligations after three rounds of coding the transcripts looked quite different and had been amalgamated into the psychological contract section:

- Psychological Contract

-- Contents - The Deal

--- Informal Agreements

- Beliefs

- Obligations

- Fulfilment

----- Obligations to home sharers

- Caring obligations

- Household and admin obligations

- Interaction obligations

----- Obligations to the organization

- Availability obligations

- Productivity obligations

------ Breach

- Violation

-- Clash

------- Home PC

- Expectations

-- Expectations from Family

--- Lack of Expectation

Figure 5.2 Template of the psychological contract, obligations and expectations

As noted in figures 5.7 and 5.8, *a priori* themes can develop with the addition of inductive sub-codes as more data is collected. This helps continually transform the original codebook until the researcher deems the codebook is 'good enough'. This decision remains a judgement call for the researcher, much like saturation in interviewing, as theoretically template analysis has no end point (King and Brooks, 2007; King, Horrocks and Brooks, 2018).

The coding process went through three full rounds for each transcript, during this process themes were added, deleted and reorganised. The final tally of codes was 177, to a depth in places of 9 levels with a total of 4,023 individual data points being coded. At the end of this process the themes produced the structure for the findings sections of this thesis whilst the transcribed quotations organised under themes help to illustrate participants' stories. The full NVivo codebook is available in Appendix 6.

5.8 Methodological Limitations

There are several limitations associated with the current study. Firstly, the sample size is relatively small. Although strong suggestions that saturation point had been met near the end of the sampling, one must accept that a larger sample may have added depth to the research, particularly in some underrepresented categories such as single parents or members of the 'junior family member' group.

Secondly, the method of purposive snowball sampling limits the generalisability of the results. Despite the best efforts of the researcher to create a varied sample, without being disparate, non-random sampling will always detract from the generalisability of the research (Austin and Pinkerton, 2001), however, when applying a constructionist epistemology this is not a primary concern. Moreover, the story and experience of the individual holds importance for the research, along with the arguments that the selected research paradigm (see section 5.3) does not prioritise generalisability of findings nor accept it as the only applicable way to check for this kind of research rigor (Section 5.5.2). By applying thick and rich description throughout the project the research is able to attest to Guba and Lincoln's 1989 naturalist alternative to generalisability, transferability.

Thirdly, it is difficult to control for social desirability bias when collecting data from participants who may be concerned about how their response will reflect on them as individuals, as employees or as managers. In attempts to circumnavigate this, the researcher ensured they made participants aware of their anonymity in the project and ensured they were comfortable and happy to proceed. Furthermore, the researcher employed techniques also used by Bergen and Labonté (2020) when trying to control for social desirability bias, including requesting examples, asking follow-up questions and posing some indirect questioning.

Fourth, several drawbacks have been noted to template analysis, including its disconnection from ontological and epistemological stances, the fragmentation of participant accounts and its extreme flexibility (King and Brooks, 2017). Due to the inherent flexibility and revisionary style of template analysis, it does not have a clear end point, no real point of saturation and the decision of when to end the alterations of the template come down to the researcher's judgement based upon the individual project (King and Brooks, 2017). This makes it hard to know if the dataset is over or underworked and it is hard to tell when the best time to deduce the findings arrives. Within this thesis, the researcher did not make a categoric decision to end the alterations to the template, instead arriving at an organic point when the findings emerged into a coherent story.

Finally, this study would lend itself to a follow-up diary study of participants to further examine their psychological contract interactions on a daily basis, potentially providing a more accurate and enlightening picture of these micro negotiations. Unfortunately, qualitative diary designs place significant demands on participation which were not deemed feasible.

5.9 Conclusion

This chapter has established the research paradigm through the researcher's ontological and epistemological positions, delineated the qualitative methodological process that will be undertaken and ensured the research meets the highest ethical standards.

During data collection the researcher used semi-structured interviewing to garner insight from 41 participants, gathered through purposive sampling, across 42 interviews. The data was coded in NVivo before being analysed using a template analysis.

In the following chapter the results of this exploration into the experience of the teleworker will be displayed.

Chapter 6: Findings on Teleworker Psychological Contracts and Technology

6.0 Introduction

The findings for the thesis will be presented across the following two chapters. Within the current chapter, the findings from the first question regarding the key content found within teleworkers' psychological contracts will be laid out, before examining the impact technology has upon the teleworkers from the sample under the findings for research question two.

6.1 Research Question One - What are the key content elements of a teleworker's psychological contract?

The psychological contract has been shown as a powerful framework to understand the complex relationships that occur between the employee and their organization, normally via line managers (Rousseau, 1989) and the content within the psychological contract pertains to what is included in 'the deal' (Herriot, Manning and Kidd, 1997). In the context of telework, the contents of the psychological contract are open for further exploration. As called for by Sparrow (2000), but as yet only rarely investigated (Jaakson and Kallaste, 2010) and even more seldom through qualitative means (Cañibano, 2019), the application of the psychological contract to telework will be thoroughly investigated in this thesis.

Since Rousseau (1990), the psychological contract has been somewhat restrictively defined in terms of constituting promises between two parties. There are two other contending constructs to represent beliefs within the psychological contract, obligations and

expectations, which receive less examination despite reasonable assumptions that they would well satisfy an exploration into the management of working relationships (Coyle-Shapiro and Conway, 2005; Roehling, 2008). Within this research the focus is turned toward these later elements as they were found to resonate more intuitively with participants, and therefore more likely to produce authentic data. By illuminating teleworking relationships through expectations and obligations, this will not only deepen our understanding of the teleworking experience but extend knowledge in the construction of the psychological contract.

The following section will look to identify how participants discussed their psychological contracts and categorise them as explicit or implicit. Following this, the role of the key agent participants identified as representing the organization, namely the line manager, is explored. Firstly, the beliefs recognised as representing the psychological contract are assessed.

6.2 Framing the Content of the Psychological Contract in the Current Research

The content of the psychological contract pertains to what is in the deal between the employee and their organization (Herriot, Manning and Kidd, 1997). Traditionally, content in the psychological contract has been assessed by analysing the individual's belief in reciprocal obligations and interpretations of promises (Rousseau and Tijoriwala, 1998) and investigated through mainly self-reporting quantitative questionnaires (DelCampo, 2007). DelCampo goes on to discuss the disagreement regarding the applicability of standardised content for psychological contracts across different samples. This opens a gap for formulation of content measures specific to their population, in this case teleworkers. Finding content that may not represent every employee universally, but may offer insight into specific samples and populations provides useful information beyond a purely idiosyncratic perspective (Rousseau and Schalk, 2001). DelCampo (2007) also suggests a lack of consistency in quantitative content measurement should lead to a shift toward more idiosyncratic, qualitative investigation. Qualitative data collection opens up the opportunity to reveal the key elements of teleworkers' psychological contracts by allowing participants

the ability to discuss and formulate their thoughts and feelings without the constraint of pre-constructed measures (Schmidt, 2004). The current research looks to explore the underlying mechanics of the teleworker's experience in greater depth through an obligation-based psychological contract lens.

6.2.1 Beliefs Underpinning the Psychological Contract Contents

Psychological contract content was investigated by discussing participants' expectations of teleworking, their perceived obligations toward their organization and of it to them, and their thoughts on how explicit or implicit the exchange underpinning the obligations were. Explicit discussion of promises tended to be limited due to a combination of poor reception from the pilot interviews where participants appeared confused by this phrasing and the opportunity to broaden psychological contract research beyond strict assumptions that a promise is required to 'activate' the important expectations and obligations (Conway and Briner, 2005; Coyle-Shapiro and Conway, 2005; Roehling, 2008). The researcher interpreted expressions according to whether they were consistent with promises from other terminology that the participants chose to use, particularly during interview; this is sensible as the demarcations between the beliefs in the psychological contract are very difficult to disaggregate for researchers, let alone for laypeople (Conway and Briner, 2005). Of course, the participants were still able to discuss promises if this was how they understood their exchange with the organization, however the fact that they very often did not indicates that the promissory terminology had connection to the felt experience for the sample. During the coding process, explicit mentions of promises were coded as such, whilst synonyms or related concepts were coded as appropriate.

Questioning during the interviews would begin with inquiries such as 'What do your family expect from you on teleworking days?' or 'How were your teleworking obligations set out to you by your employer?' (see interview crib sheet for more details, Appendix 3) before settling into a more open conversation as would be expected in semi-structured interviewing (Galletta, 2013). By guiding the conversation with a focus on expectations and obligations rather than promises helped to prevent stifling the participants' flow during discussion, whilst still addressing the pertinent information that constructs psychological contract beliefs. The project sought viewpoints from members up and down the

organizational ladder, so a well-rounded picture of obligation and expectations from the perspective of employees and their line managers was achieved.

6.2.2 Differentiating Explicit and Implicit Exchanges

The psychological contract is known to have both explicit and implicit elements, although the former is questioned by some of scholars (Cullinane and Dundon, 2006), while key psychological contract researchers Rousseau (1995) and Conway and Briner (2005) ascertain that, ultimately, even explicit terms are subjectively interpreted by individuals.

In the current research, explicit exchanges are enacted from the organization through written policy documentation, individual working contracts that clearly state job role obligations and clear written or verbal communication from line managers. These explicit communications helped to form some of the employees' expectations. An example of an explicit deal occurred when time off in lieu (TOIL) was discussed:

> *"I'm more willing to do like work outside of my sort of flexi hours, obviously I get TOIL back, which is really something that I was never given by my old employer... Anything between eight and six is like you take as flexi hours throughout the week, but anything before eight and after six, you can take your time back in lieu… yeah I'm more obligated because I'm getting a reward back, if that makes sense."* (Rose, Student Recruitment Coordinator, 25)

Obligation to go above and beyond is felt through a clear exchange, effort for reward, and in this case the level of willingness to behave in this way is increased. This example also helps to validate the use of qualitative means when assessing the psychological contract as the exchange is clearly presented – reward of TOIL from the employer equals the obligation to be flexible from the employee. Previously, quantitative means have been criticised for being too vague to cover exact exchanges, or to simply make no attempt to consider the underlying exchange, and in doing so overlooking the defining quality of exchange (Conway and Briner, 2005).

Turning toward previous conceptualisations of implicit exchanges, they stand central to what constitutes the majority of psychological contract content:

"The concept is used to highlight implicit and unspoken expectations which antedate the relationship between employer and employee." (Anderson and Schalk, 1998, p.638)

Within the current research, implicit beliefs were present throughout the teleworking exchange, such as Justin's experience of judging the acceptability of taking consecutive workdays from home:

> *"Nothing is explicitly stated, but I think sort of any more than one day it was more difficult."* (Justin, Research Assistant, 25)

Drawing from implicit beliefs for what is acceptable in terms of productivity and availability were often stated as an understanding that is gained with experience. Justin, being fairly new to teleworking, was still feeling out how often he needed to 'show face' in the office. When expectations are not explicitly stated anywhere, such as in Justin's induction, this makes understanding his obligation to the organization less clear.

One way to understand how individual psychological contracts differ in their clarity is to use the distinctions of relational and transactional. This has been an oft-cited distinction and will now be assessed. Rousseau (1990) coined the terms to show that pay and career advancement could be traded for hard work (transactional), whereas relational contracts trade, for example, job security for acts of loyalty. Transactional contracts are further defined by being more specific, explicit, and over a short time frame, whereas relational are loosely specified, implicit and long term (Conway and Briner, 2005). Later testing of this theoretical division would go on to show each type has differing effects on psychological contract outcomes (Grimmer and Oddy, 2007; Montes and Irving, 2008). However, from the employees' perspective it is often hard to differentiate between the two types of psychological contract and they are often merged (Conway and Briner, 2005).

Within the current project, the researcher initially disaggregated these types of psychological contract due to their experience within the field. In the following selected cases, which refer to what is expected of the teleworker from their organization whilst they are working away from the office, the two types of contract are shown. Firstly, an example of a more explicit, transactional exchange:

> *"No different from what I was doing when I was at work, they weren't expecting anything else. They expect you deliver and I'd go ahead and do that."* (Graham, Project Accountant, 37)

To this much more implicit, relational set of expectations:

> *"Because of my job, there are some out of hours expectations of me… there will be drinks receptions afterwards, we have a whole bunch of sort of ceremonial type things there where there is an expectation of senior staff to attend. It's a quiet expectation. It's not a three-line whip, but you kind of... I don't know whether this actually really does exist or whether it just exists in my head. But I do think that being visible at those, those sort of things, does help when it comes to things like career progression."* (David, Internal Auditor and Director of Business Assurance, 50)

Across the sample as a whole however, the differentiation of transactional and relational was not clear and often elements of both were entangled:

> *"Flexible working, in my opinion. I think you just got to know how to do it properly.*
>
> Researcher: *Would you suggest that this is something that maybe should come from the top down?*
>
> *Absolutely. Yeah, all the pressures are very much unspoken. Things they force you to do and I think they quietly like the fact that everyone is working to 11pm. The office is always empty at five-thirty, everyone leaves but everyone knows when they're working when they get home, you know, or at the dinner table or something. It's not something which is spoken about, there's never been any correspondence about how people should be working. I think that was I think this year, I think I heard a senior manager gave some kind of guidance at the beginning on how what your capacity should be, but It's not, it's not there's nothing written into the ethics of how we work."* (Stephen, IT Consultant, 27)

Here the explicit notions of leaving work at a contractually agreed time are tempered by an implicit expectation to log on in the evening. A senior manager tries to present a clearer vision of what should be done, but this is not backed up with policy.

Being unable to separate contract types across the sample may arguably be another instance of qualitative means displaying a more complex demonstration of an exchange over a quantitative study where the experiences of these two types of psychological contract are simplified. Furthermore, the nature of teleworking presents content elements that would cross over transactional and relational categorisations. For example, by using Conway and Briner's 2005 categorisations of relational and transactional contracts, we can further understand how typical features of teleworking lead its actors to mingle both types of contract simultaneously. Teleworking is a long-term arrangement which lends itself to a relational classification but will often be bound by policy and a clear contractual agreement (both transactional), where the details are negotiated through informal means (as demonstrated in the current research).

With this in mind, the distinction of the psychological contract along the lines of transactional/relational will not be held as a focus of the thesis. Instead more attention will be given to the explicit/implicit distinction and examples where participants perceive explicit obligations, but the understanding of such obligations entail understanding related implicitly communicated information, often via line managers:

> *"So, we all got put at risk of redundancy through the summer and people brought up the question of 'What about flexible workers? Will flexible workers have to start coming back full time as part of this restructure and reorganization?' Then, at that point, he [the line manager] kind of did this whole spiel about, no, flexible working was something we should be able to offer… But then when you really push it into practice, I don't think he's as flexible as he makes out he is because he's very focused on deadlines and deliverables and if stuff needs to be done then stuff needs to be done. So, it's a bit of a mixed message… he's putting a business spin on it and he's saying it's not right for the business to have this team full of flexible workers right now. It doesn't suit because we have a high level of work to do"* (Daisy, Lead Business Architect, 41)

As with other studies on the psychological contract (Hiltrop, 1996; Petersitzke, 2009) line managers hold intermediary roles through which the organization's side of the psychological contract was communicated. Now that the explicit and implicit aspects and their

interactions within this sample has been articulated, the vital role of line manager interaction will be discussed.

6.2.3 The Role of the Line Manager

Performing often as the conduit of organizational policies, the role of the line manager in the psychological contract has previously been stated as crucial (Hallier and James, 1997; Petersitzke, 2009).

Within the sample, all of the participants were reporting to someone they recognised as their line manager, with just under half the sample also managing others. When self-reporting on their interactions with staff regarding telework, the managerial participants portrayed themselves as fair, with a pro-teleworking stance:

> *"I'm very open minded because of what I went through, if they say to me, Tarquin, so and so has got something at the school tomorrow, I just say, 'Just work from home'… we've got a very open relationship with, with the team. If they want to work from home, then as long as they are not taking the piss then I'm quite happy for them to do it. I think you get more out of people. As long as you trust, trust is the big word and if you trust that they're doing the work at home, and they're getting their job done, they can be sitting in a ship as far as I'm concerned, as long as they're getting the work done."* (Tarquin, Forecasting Manager, 54)

The propensity for teleworking managers to appear positive to avoid sounding hypocritical is a possibility. To take the above example, Tarquin later states he has a preference for working in the office and was one of the participants that took the fewest days from home. Furthermore, Tarquin backs up his ʻopen minded ʼstance with business reasoning in terms of productivity and also requires trust in the employee. Later in his interview he states that he is not comfortable with all his staff working from home. From the researcher's experience of interviewing this sample, Tarquin's attitude was not typical and instead the perception of employees that their teleworking managers were insincere was not supported. Teleworking managers appear genuine when reflecting on the teleworking opportunities that they afford to their staff, allowing, with degrees of stipulations, teleworking for their staff across the board.

Examining the line manager relationship from an employee upward reporting stance is the main relationship that will be examined in this thesis, and to those ends, participants generally held favourable relations with their line managers at a ratio of roughly 2:1. This was discovered through a series of questions which specifically examined the participants relationship with their line manager in general and in regards to teleworking. Responses thereafter were coded in to, amongst other locations, 'Positive Line Manger Relationships' and 'Negative Line Manager Relationships'. Whether positive or negative, the key role of the line manager was in conveying their interpretations of the organization's teleworking policy, which often differed from the purely contractual stipulations:

> *"I'm relatively senior so I know in some places you would put it in the contract, but probably the last three jobs it's more, kind of, agreement with my boss and, to be fair, I do the same with my own team, as long as nobody is taking the Mickey then we're cool, if someone starts taking the Mickey then we have to start playing by the book."* (Alan, Global Marketing Executive and Part-Time Church Minister, 50)

When line managers take control of the way in which teleworking arrangements are organized and interpreted, their importance within the exchange is increased. Now the role of line managers has been established the two fundamental content elements of the psychological contract exchange will be presented: autonomy for the teleworker in exchange for productivity and availability.

6.3 Obligations in Teleworkers' Psychological Contract Contents

Typically for teleworkers, obligations are split between those held to the organization, most often represented by their line managers, and those to their home lives, most commonly in the case of the current sample this included family and romantic partners.

The importance of understanding obligations in the psychological contract is emphasised by Guest (2004), when he assessed how psychological contracts develop. He alludes to obligations as having the potential to associate with stronger feeling and better reflect societal values than promises. The consequences of conflicting obligations are not well

researched and Guest goes on to suggest this avenue of future research. The 2017 exploration of the antecedents to employees' failure to maintain their work obligations by Bordia et al. find work-family conflict as a main player, thus reaffirming the need to continue exploring this topic.

The current research looks to explore in greater depth the underlying mechanics of the teleworker's experience through an obligation centric psychological contract lens.

6.3.1 Teleworkers' Obligations to the Organization

A teleworker holds at least as many responsibilities to the organization as an office-based counterpart (Jaakson and Kallaste, 2010). As expected with a heterogenous sample, there was a variety of job obligations based on job sector and job role in this sample, although all the teleworkers held jobs within professional, administrative or managerial positions. These differences did produce some nuanced findings that will be discussed later in the thesis, but were not so great that the findings from sector to sector or role to role were incomparable. Tenure in role seemed to have little effect on levels of obligations felt, from recent graduates who were new to work to experienced high level managers, strong work obligations were found throughout and no participant in the sample was found to be unconscientious or 'dialling it in' when it came to their work ethic.

Compare this quote from Justin who has been in their role and their teleworking arrangements for less than two years:

> *"…if it's like my own, you know, stats project or something or just need to keep my head down and crack on, probably better at home when you haven't got all these distractions you know people coming up to you…*
>
> *Researcher: What typical hours do you think you work when you're at home?*
>
> *I probably work longer hours when I'm at home, just because I'm not commuting so I finished tend to finish later. So, I probably work start maybe nine and finish at six whereas in the office I'll probably do my standard nine to five."* (Justin, Research assistant, 25)

To Trevor who is a senior manager that has been teleworking for nearly ten years:

I get far more done when I'm working from home than I do in a workspace. Typical office environment. There's a lot of other distractions people will come and ask you to do other things which really isn't relevant… and with my job if I'm doing something which is very key and attention to detail, sometimes I have to go back a stage and go 'Where was I, what was I doing?', and then you lose concentration.

Researcher: And whereas at home, you have less distractions?

Less distractions, although the phones there and emails there, you know, you can sort of ignore them to an extent so you can see them pop up, but then you can just crack on with what you need to do and don't have those other distractions… I think I do work more [at home]. I work harder, I work faster, I work smarter and I work longer." (Trevor, Analyst, 58)

These examples typify many others within the research.

Obligations to the organization were primarily categorised into two types, based on (a) productivity obligations and (b) on availability obligations. The two types capture well the distinction between feeling obliged to deliver high workloads and feeling obliged to be available beyond conventional 9-to-5 office hours.

6.3.1.1 Productivity Obligations

Teleworkers within the sample regularly reported feeling obliged to perform at a high level, which often appeared to exceed the expectations held when they were in the office. In this section the key features of what and how teleworkers offered to meet these expectations are identified.

Defining productivity of professionals and knowledge workers has been noted as difficult due to the often-unmeasurable outputs that they produce (Ray and Sahu, 1989; Thomas and Baron, 1994). This was exemplified by Ruby who notes the struggle to show her productivity:

"My role is not producing that much sort of concrete deliverables, a lot of it is mostly processing, stakeholder interactions, sort of big thinking on policy, which doesn't mean you can say at the end of the day I've done this many of whatever it is you've asked me to do. So, it's quite hard sometimes to show you've been working over the

day because you can spend a whole day and have nothing sort of material to show for it" (Ruby, Policy Advisor, 26)

Ruby reflects on an issue Drucker (1999) mentions in his assessment of the difficulties defining productivity for knowledge workers, measuring the quality of mental, thought based work compared to quantity of units produced. In producing a taxonomy for knowledge worker productivity, Ramírez and Nembhard (2004) deduced that there is no agreement on a generalisable method to measure the productivity of these workers. Kianto et al. (2018) did however produce three dimensions to explore when adjudging knowledge worker productivity, timeliness on deadlines, task efficiency and job autonomy. The current project lacks the scope to objectively measure these factors as the sample is self-reporting, however, it goes to exemplify that the knowledge teleworker has additional leeway when understanding how their productivity is measured, which in itself could affect how productive they feel obliged to provide.

When attempting to define productivity in the current sample, it must be considered that firstly, the sample was mixed between knowledge workers with an emphasis on thinking and researching, and professionals with an emphasis on project delivery and services. Therefore, in the current study productivity will be defined by a more personal expression of working that regards the active engagement in completing any work task, whether deliverables are clearly defined or not. As shown by Kim et al (2019) even in a small sample, workers define their personal productivity in many ways and attempting to constrain under one conceptualisation may be too constrictive.

The most apparent signifier for employment tasks that the teleworker is obliged to undertake are usually held within the employment contract. However, contractual obligations aren't always clear for the teleworkers to decode:

> *"…it's very hard to determine what's expected of you in your contract. You're written eight-thirty to five on one clause, and the next clause is that you must do whatever the company is requiring you to do on any particular day as well. So, there's no line of when you should stop working in your contract and there's no training or guidance…"* (Stephen, IT Consultant, 27)

Inherent ambiguities in the obligations the participants encounter furthers the reliance on their line manager to provide appropriate expectations when teleworking. The impact of the bar setting by line managers in terms of productivity was crucial to forming obligations for the teleworkers:

> *"The whole team was completely under-resourced and overworked. Our manager herself was part-time but logged on during her non-working days, so set a really bad expectation. She would set very bad time scales and like I said, we were all completely overburdened… twelve-hour days were quite normal… she really did set expectations and precedents that weren't healthy."* (Millie, Operational Researcher, 27)

This bar setting from the teleworker's manager can be seen as a precondition to conflicting obligations. Poorly judged expectations will have a knock-on effect on the teleworker's ability to successfully manage their working pattern, potentially leading to a conflict with their home responsibilities.

Furthermore, the danger of a teleworker being accidentally overburdened with work demands is referenced repeatedly by participants. The terminology of 'ripping off a band-aid' is used, in conjunction with other synonyms, which illuminate the process managers use when adding to a teleworkers workload when they are remote as the manager appears less connected than when in person, finding it easier to add to workloads quickly without consequence. This suggests it is easier for line managers to overburden teleworkers when they are working remotely than when sharing the same physical space.

> *"…they'll be like, 'I need these ten slides tomorrow' and they know it means you have to work overnight, but because they're not really in the room with you it's quite easy to say, it's like ripping a Band-Aid off almost. So, I think there's a lack of empathy going around. If I'm asking someone to do some work for me in Sweden, they've never done before, I don't really know how long it's going to take him. Do I really care? You know, that's the kind of thing which I think working in front of the screen the whole time."* (Stephen, IT Consultant, 27)

It is interesting to note that although Stephen does not enjoy the lack of empathy he receives, he passes on the same demands to others in the organization, suggesting the development of new acceptable norms when teleworking within his company.

Participants also noted that the impacts of the increased workloads are harder to spot when away from the collegial workspace. From a managerial viewpoint in the study, participants noted several of their employees who had returned from long stints working at home appeared visibly under strain form the experience. From the employee perspective, the amount of work required far outstripped the individual's capacity on several occasions, but a tendency to say 'yes' and a lack of colleagues present to notice led one participant to 12-hour, 7-day working weeks. The further precondition of teleworkers being expected to have higher capacity would plausibly lead to increased conflict between work and home life. More coverage of the effects of overworking will be made under RQ4, which centres on well-being.

The creation of productivity obligations does not always emanate directly from managerial input. Daisy's conscientiousness dictates her levels of output:

> *"So, if I know I've had a particularly bad week where I haven't really pulled my weight, then I'll flip that around the following week or I'll do a couple of hours on a weekend because then I feel like – it's kind of like a moral obligation to your employer isn't it? So, I feel like I'm doing what I should be doing. So, yeah, if you have that conscience."* (Lead Business Architect, 41)

The previous 'bad week' where she had an overload of home sphere issues caused a guilt laden obligation to reinvest extra effort into work in the following week. The expectation to exceed in productivity also appeared in comparison to of office-based colleagues within the sample, such as in the case of Susanne:

> *"I just think, yeah, probably looking at how you value yourself, and whether ... and sometimes maybe what my perception of what my bosses or colleagues think, as well. Maybe sometimes you over-think it when you're away, and you feel you need to prove yourself, and so you probably do give more ... I'm not saying that my colleagues who don't give 100% or whatever, but I think you do feel like there's this push to justify yourself."* (PA to Head of a Private School, 41)

The key feature of Susanne's experience was proving herself against others that work in a predominantly traditional working environment, a school, to show that teleworking was a viable option in her role. Further examples from the study show that the need to display heightened productivity at home was not just in comparison to others, but in self-comparison:

> *"I get far more done when I'm working from home than I do in a workspace, typical office environment. There's a lot of other distractions people will come and ask you to do other things which really isn't relevant… [at home I have] less distractions, although the phones there and emails there, you know, you can sort of ignore them to an extent so you can see them pop up, but then you can just crack on with what you need to do and don't have those other distractions."* (Trevor, Analyst, 58)

The combinations of extrinsic preconditions, such as detachment from colleagues and intrinsic obligations such as conscientiousness to the job, was present throughout the sample and showed that the obligation to provide high levels of output and productivity was a key pillar of the teleworker's psychological contract with their organization.

6.3.1.2 Availability Obligations

Being available to work includes periods where the teleworker is not expected to be at work, such as outside their contracted working hours, but the individual is not switched off to work communication and in a state of readiness to respond if required. Throughout the research there was general consensus of acceptance of the obligation to be available outside of working hours or whilst on holiday:

> *"I'm quite lucky in the team I'm in, we've got a really good team relationship. We all have each other's numbers and have a group chat, so if there's something urgent they'll tag me in it or my boss will text me, which I have absolutely no problem with at all. I don't consider that out of hours working.*
>
> Researcher: *Why's that?*
>
> *Because I don't really see there being set hours of working, it's the psychological contract - I asked to work flexibly to accommodate my personal life and choices so I expect to be flexible in return. If that means someone sends me a text on a non-working day then so be it."* (Anna, Analyst, 41)

Here we can note gratitude from Anna for her teleworking situation, she sees availability as the acceptable price one must pay for teleworking, even on days where she would not normally work. Availability at first glance is driven by line mangers and colleagues constructing what is acceptable:

> *"And also, when I say it's a new norm, you're driven by the culture of the people. You're around when everyone's very much the same. That's just the way it is. When your boss is responding to you at ten o'clock at night you think that actually this is the way it is."* (Kris, Retail Director, 40)

The assumed norm held by teleworkers that everyone else is available creates strong obligations within themselves to be available:

> *"I think it's about being available so for example, signing into Teams – which I do when I'm in the office too, buts it's something I'm not as conscious of when I'm in the office, but when I'm at home I really make sure it's on, just so that if people do need me in a more casual way I am available."* (Poppy, Head of Communications, 32)

Throughout the study there was a sense of willingness to be more available, a sense of virtual presenteeism where teleworkers respond quicker to emails and flagged themselves as working whenever possible. Often these behaviours calmed down as experience in their roles progressed, but some experienced teleworkers continue to show these behaviours, demonstrating that these availability obligations can continue throughout an individua's career. By interpreting the obligations teleworkers feel from their organization in more detail we can begin to construct a picture of the pressure felt on a daily basis. Teleworking successfully requires teleworkers to show high levels of productivity and availability, which paradoxically presents an obstacle to successfully managing their personal obligations, often cited as a key reason to telework (Mazmanian, Orlikowski and Yates, 2013). We can also note that the obligations to hold high levels of productivity and availability stem from both line manager interactions and from the teleworker's internal motivation.

6.3.2 Autonomy and the Psychological Contract Exchange: The Key Employer Obligation to Teleworkers

The teleworker's psychological contract exchange centres on the organization offering autonomy, via the line manager, in return for continued productivity and availability. Maintenance of the psychological contract is continual through observational monitoring and evaluations with failure to meet the expectations of productivity and availability leading to breach on the employee's side, whilst trust needs to be given from the organization for continued autonomy. This section will explain how this construction is not a new idea to psychological contract research, but one that exemplifies the teleworker's psychological contract.

The implicit and explicit exchanges of autonomy for availability and productivity were evident through a series of themes extracted from the raw data. Figure 6.1 shows that autonomy represents the key obligation that the employer offers teleworkers on the left-hand side, with the key obligation employees were expected to do in return were to be productive and available, shown on the right-hand side. Toward the bottom of the figure are the facilitators that support the exchange. These exchanges and facilitators will be explored in depth under this section and constitute the key elements of teleworkers' psychological contracts.

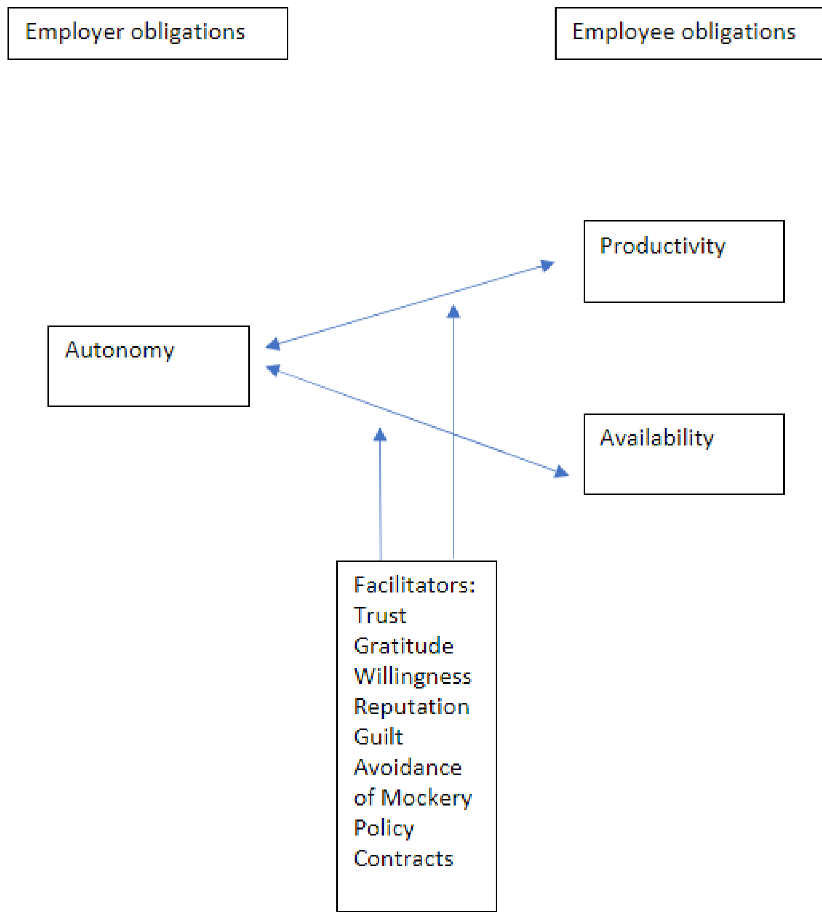

Figure 6.1. The importance of autonomy in the teleworker's psychological contract

A consistent, overarching theme that drew positive sentiment from teleworkers was that autonomy was the most important employer obligation that teleworkers hoped to receive from their organizations. It created several branches of perceived benefit in the eye of the teleworker. Having control over where (spatial) and when (temporal) to undertake their work did not create a direct well-being improvement for the teleworker, the process was more complex. It was perceived as a method of control that the participants could lever against their schedule, leading to a route towards increased time for life admin, leisure time or fulfilling non-work obligations to home sharers.

The importance of autonomy in the exchange between employers and employees is not a new finding in itself. From some of the earliest psychological contract research, foremen that let workers get on with their work in peace, without micro-management, were rewarded by these workers with raised levels of performance (Argyris, 1960) and this quid pro quo withstands to the present research. However, now the workers' work follows them

home and the simple disconnect between work and non-work present in Argyris' time have been fused together by the technologies available to organizations that keep teleworkers engaged. For teleworking, this is also not new, with extra household responsibilities and family engagement found in many studies (Hilbrecht, Shaw and Johnson, 2008; Tremblay, 2002; Troup and Rose, 2012). However, with the extreme uptake in telework seen during the Covid-19 pandemic, these and other findings noted in teleworking literature are ripe for re-exploration and better detailing.

When Sparrow (2000) foretold the possible development of the psychological contract for teleworkers he suggested that increased autonomy could lead to psychological contract breach via increased negligence and less care for the organization. This assumption was clearly rejected in the current data and this is the first key finding identified in this thesis. Autonomy has increased the fulfilment of the individual's psychological contract toward the employer and almost all participants worked harder as a result. Those who did not notably work harder still completed their work satisfactorily without incident of breach. In terms of working harder, this was identified in the analysis as autonomy in exchange for increased productivity or increased levels of availability.

Remarks on autonomy from the current project aligned more closely with Azim et al. (2012) who showed that increased job autonomy has positive effects on organizational commitment and the work-home psychological contract. The benefits of autonomy are also discussed in job crafting literature, where increased autonomy and increased job crafting go hand in hand, leading to well-being improvement (Slemp and Kern, 2015), although the price paid by teleworkers to gain autonomy would not be readily visible when accessing job crafting. Palumbo (2020) suggests that high levels of autonomy can lead to teleworkers letting work demands overrun their spatial-temporal boundaries and 'contaminate' home-life, leading to a well-being regression. Increased autonomy can also lead to increased isolation (Golden, Veiga and Dino, 2008), however, the prerequisite for this sample to be cohabiting with a partner or family may have negated the most extreme forms of isolation.

The amount of autonomy afforded to teleworkers created an environment where breach was rarely felt, at least in a traditional psychological contract sense, where breach represents a major incursion on the employees' working experience (Robinson and Morrison, 2000). This was surprising, but there are several explanations to be brought

forward for this. Firstly, the teleworker has a deal with the organization that lets them work away from direct, in-person supervision – trust is already given to the teleworker from a benevolent organization to conduct their work remotely. Secondly, if an event occurs that may constitute a breach in the psychological contract, that is not directly related to removing autonomy, that very concept is there to smooth out these occurrences, as teleworker autonomy and flexibility can be enacted to soften breaches. Finally, rather than major breaches, teleworkers from the sample accrued smaller breaches, similar to the 'everyday breaches' described by Parzefall and Shapiro-Coyle (2011). This would fit with the notion that teleworkers already have trusting relations with the organization that can be tempered with flexibility. More discussion will be undertaken on how these small breaches and conflicts affected the sample under RQ3.

The autonomy exchange for participants was understood in two distinct ways; through explicit and implicit line manager relationships and explicit policy expectations. Most of the sample reflected that a combination of these factors contributed to their psychological contracts. Autonomy fostered from trust between the line manager and teleworker often began with the manager also having telework arrangements, thus understanding the mechanics of the arrangements or perhaps looking to avoid being hypocritical. The teleworkers supported by policy needed to pass a probationary period (in some cases accelerated to alleviate desk space issues) to qualify for a teleworking routine. For the remaining teleworkers, who were smaller in number, either their line manager was not a teleworker, or their job was traditionally a fixed office role, if the latter, negotiation with managers took time and trials and reviews were necessary to allow telework to take place.

Exploration of the two key exchanges (autonomy for productivity; autonomy of availability) will now be detailed, followed by examining how each of the facilitators support the content of the teleworke's psychological contract.

6.3.2.1 Autonomy for Productivity

For traditional workers, the positive relationship between productivity for autonomy and vice versa has been shown in quantitative research (Shobe, 2018) and even using neuroscience (Johannsen and Zak, 2020). However, in the field of telework there has been paradoxical tension on the subject (Dimitrova, 2003).

Before assessing the current sample, a note on the delineation of terms used in the findings. Autonomy for productivity also features elements of temporal flexibility that may at first appear to be related to availability. However, availability does not only mean working extra hours or at irregular times, but is the notion that one should be contactable throughout and beyond, the normal workday. For example, if a participant stated that they were working at 10pm this would be categorised as a productivity related demand even though it is outside of normal working hours, if it were not, any productivity demand not between 9am and 5pm would be an availability demand, skewing results. If a participant stated that they would be ready to respond to emails until 10pm this would be availability. Therefore, it is possible for these two actions to crossover.

To begin with, the autonomy for productivity exchange will be discussed:

> *"I'm to a certain degree my own boss, because I have work allocated to me and I know how long it's going to take to get done, I know where I need to be to get that job done, so I can then decide whether I need to be in the office or at home."* (Richard, Payroll Consultant, 53)

Here autonomy is encapsulated by 'being one's own boss' and Richard maintains this autonomy by staying on top of his workload, thus choosing how much time he teleworks.

Focusing on the exchange of productivity for autonomy, we can observe how successful management of workload allows for freedom:

> *"So generally, I'm left alone. So, the relationship that I had with him [line manager], which I think he was the same with other people is as long as you're on top of everything, I'll leave you alone."* (Linda, Social Worker, 57)

And the onus to be productive is placed upon the teleworker:

> *"We're not micromanaged by the business. People in the business understand that we are remote workers... it's down to us to coordinate our diaries accordingly and to get the job done, but to try and be as productive as we possibly can."* (Jeff, Sales Manager, 48)

From these examples it becomes apparent that teleworkers understand being productive is exchanged for more freedom over their schedule and their autonomy to self-organise.

As the sample of teleworkers also contained managers, we can note that this arrangement is felt in a similar way from a line manager's perspective:

> *"Yeah, I'd rather deal with it and have done. Like I say, she's [David's manager] not really bothered what format the work takes so long as it gets done. So, I guess my attitude then in managing a department of sixteen people sort of was shaped by that very similar thing. Don't tell me how you are doing it, just tell me that you've done it is kind of what my mantra would be."* (David, Internal Auditor and Director of Business Assurance, 50)

Here a direct line of allowing autonomy for productivity flows through David's organization, his manager's stance dictates how he manages his team in regards to teleworking.

Throughout the research participants acknowledged that being productive at home is key to maintaining their teleworking arrangement once established, meaning teleworkers were not likely to 'slack off' once afforded the opportunity to do so, productivity for autonomy was an ongoing exchange. The exchange also becomes somewhat self-perpetuating as autonomy became not only a desirable facet of teleworking, but also served as a key mechanism to achieving productive teleworking. The freedom to schedule their working lives allowed other tasks to be juggled effectively, more on this topic will be covered under research questions two and five.

From a managerial perspective this became part of decision making on allowing how much an employee could telework, here a manager discusses setting the boundaries for an employee that wants to engage in more telework:

> *"We had a difference of opinion in what we'd agreed verbally when we were going through contract negotiations and she was coming from a corporate... environment and was looking for quite a lot of home working... we did have different expectations at the time, and I think I was still quite influenced by those older traditional thoughts I mean, bearing in mind, most of the professional services at the organization was still very much traditionally a five-day week, nine to five sort of thing... I felt like she needed more presence, because she was in a leadership role… there were pastoral things she needed to do, things that only happen over a coffee… so I agreed to the one day a week because we were having so many difficulties with the others… would*

I have seen it as part of a negotiation in the psychological contract? It was sort of, it was me saying look, I'll meet you somewhere along the line here, but you're gonna have to put something into this as well, and she has, I mean, she's still.. somebody only said to me the other day, you need to have a word with her because in the office, when you're not there, there's still the sort of, you know, it's broken, it doesn't work." (David, Internal Auditor and Director of Business Assurance, 50)

David's on-going management of the teleworking deal with one of his team shows that the arrangement is not fixed, but negotiated and up for renegotiation. Feedback from others showed that the individual was not as available in the office as required and David showed concern that some aspects of his role needed to take place face to face. Offering availability when striving to telework is a crucial aspect and how this is traded for autonomy by teleworkers will now be discussed.

6.3.2.1 Autonomy for Availability

Throughout the study a second distinct trend was identified, autonomy was traded for enhanced levels of availability to work when in the non-work domain and outside contracted working hours. Availability is defined by Bergman and Gardiner (p. 412, 2007) as *"accessibility in time and space and responsiveness to the needs and wants of others, including employers and family"*

Poppy made sure to promote her availability when working from home by use of 'flagging up' her presence online:

> *"I think it's about being available. So, for example, signing into Teams – which I do when I'm in the office too, buts it's something I'm not as conscious of when I'm in the office, but when I'm at home I really make sure it's on, just so that if people do need me in a more casual way I am available"* (Poppy, Head of Communications, 32)

Poppy also expressed in another part of her interview that her working hours had become extended whilst at home in recent times. Use of team working apps to present oneself as available and overworking can be closely associated with the concept of virtual presenteeism and being 'always-on' - where individuals are expected to be contactable and responsive to work needs far outside of normal working hours (Middleton, 2007). Cooper and Lu (2018) also make the theoretical link between availability and autonomy when

suggesting that an employee with autonomous orientations will intrinsically become more available for work, with positive outcomes for the employee. However, if the employee is extrinsically motivated the benefits of excessive availability are questioned. With teleworkers conducting work away from colleagues and with differing working patterns they appear to be even more susceptible to potentially extreme availability behaviours (Beauregard, Basile, and Canonico, 2019).

Beyond that concern, teleworkers may need to proactively present their availability to avoid losing connection with their organization, a factor Kris only realised when leaving his former company:

> *"My last line manager, if you weren't in his face, and you weren't actively volunteering, and if you were in the wonderful remote world doing stuff, he'd start to feel like he'd lost you a little bit. I remember a couple of times, he'd go, 'I feel like you've disappeared'… It's massively demotivating because you think if only you can see what I'm doing, but actually you can't and it's a failure of me. Yeah, so if there's one learning I had on my exit… is when you're flexible, you have to dedicate time to proving what it is that you're doing because you're not in people's faces. So, what you have to do is to probably spend and dedicate a chunk of your working week to reporting the positive outcomes linked to your role, because it's too easy to disappear. Also, there is a general reputation out there in the world of flexibility, it's a bit of an ongoing joke, but we all think we know someone that doesn't do anything, that they're remote and all they're doing is watching Netflix"* (Kris, Retail Director, 40)

Although afforded autonomy, failure to maintain the appearance of availability and report achievements eroded Kris' relationship with his manager, potentially due in part to reinforcement of negative stereotypes. Therefore, if one does not feel a natural compunction toward availability, signaling the process must become more effortful to maintain desired autonomy.

There are cues that teleworkers look for and behaviours they engage in when making decisions on their offer of availability that they will exchange for autonomy. Three of them are demonstrated within the next quote. We can note a **policy expectation** of seven hours,

a **line manager expectation** that in this case is relaxed and an **internal check**, which while teleworkers acknowledge the theoretical possibility of taking time off during their scheduled workday, in practice it is rarely, if ever, realised:

> *"I guess it's just to be working for those seven hours that's what I would think the base expectation is, and if you mean from my manager, I don't think there's any real expectation because I think, as far as she's concerned, the work that I would need to cover in those seven hours would be covered whether I was at my desk there at nine o'clock and clocking off at five, having had an hour for lunch. But, you know, the fact that she will get emails from me at seven, eight, nine o'clock at night relating to the work that I've been doing during the day, I think probably means that she wouldn't even give it a second thought that if I wanted to have a two hour lunch to go.. and it's not that I've ever done this but hit some balls at the range and I genuinely mean that, I haven't. I think my days working at home, do tend to be.. they are quite often more intense working days than they are in the office."* (David, Internal Auditor and Director of Business Assurance, 50)

Drawing from multiple reference points on how available one should be when teleworking displays the inherent complexities with working away from colleagues and managers, even when the expectation appears to be clearly laid out as seven hours, the implicit expectation of being available extends way beyond contracted hours.

Although listed separately above, autonomy for productivity and autonomy for availability frequently crossed over. Therefore, the next section will include the key features that facilitated the exchanges of both productivity and availability in return for the teleworker's autonomy. At the base of Figure 6.1 are these said facilitators to the exchange, they provide the conceptual footing that facilitates the teleworker's psychological contract exchange.

6.4 Facilitators of the Exchange – Trust: A Psychological Contract Staple

This findings section will now turn to the facilitators of the autonomy exchange. These facilitators are the guiding forces that support the exchange.

Trust was one of the concepts discussed most by the sample, trust operated in the background as a precondition to allowing telework and fostering successful working relationships, findings such as these are well established in previous research (Harrington and Ruppel, 1999; Lewicki and Bunker, 1996). From a psychological contract viewpoint, trust was shown to have a supporting effect on the psychological contract exchange. As well as employees earning trust to telework, managers made their responsibility to impart trust upon them clear:

> *"…a big part of teleworking, remote working is trust and that needs to come from the top down, not the bottom up. Yeah, so that has to come from the senior leaders of the business, and they have to demonstrate and show that they trust individuals to work remotely."* (Jeff, Sales Manager, 48)

Managers in the study bestowed trust upon teleworking employees, often due to themselves also having telework arrangements, thus understanding the mechanics of the arrangements. This may mean that they are avoiding being hypocritical, or that they understand from their own experience that the teleworker is likely to give more to the organization in terms of productivity and availability if they are given the trust to operate autonomously. Either way, once established, trust was then maintained through the monitoring of performance. Shown here in terms of output from the manager's perspective:

> *"I think they know me, I've told them, they know I trust them to get on with it and, to be honest, the output becomes quite obvious after a while."* (Alan, Global Marketing Executive, 50)

From an employee standpoint, trust also appeared as a facilitator to the exchange of being productive and gaining more autonomy over when teleworking can be done:

> *"You know, you would say, 'Right, I'd like to work from home next Tuesday because,*

is that OK?' I think it started off as very incremental and ad hoc, and then there was this, sort of, building of trust between you and your management to say that, actually, yes, you can see that I'm being as productive working from home, I'd like to do it again. So, you build on that." (Gordan, Continuity and Resilience Manager, 41)

And in the form of availability and presence:

"There's a lot of flexibility and a lot of trust in our roles so we're trusted to manage our own time really so whether that's our general working hours, as long as you're in by a certain point and the likes and online by a certain point and the same with working from home…" (Ron, Demand Planner, Male, 32)

This type of subtle monitoring of employees' hours was typical of the sample, although itemised timesheets were present for some, no participant was subject to intense monitoring (key stroke tracking for example) and several teleworkers commented on how this was welcomed and that it was the trust that formed a powerful bond between them and their line manager that meant such measures were unnecessary. These relationships should not be taken for granted however, as there is an increasing body of evidence that shows remote work surveillance is a genuine alternative for organizations to take in place of forming trusting relationships (Sewell and Taskin, 2015; Katsabian, 2020).

Participants maintained trust primarily through the output of high-quality work (although this was of course subjective due to the nature of the data collection) and through weekly meetings and reviews. Supporting the needs of the teleworker further helped nurture trust in the organization, again, fostered primarily from line manager interactions:

"I'm also very supported. If I've got problems if I'm going through difficult times, or if I need to change if you know something's not working, she [her line manager] will change it. It's not a case of 'Oh just be quiet and carry on'…" (Millie, Operational Researcher, 27)

Trust is a mainstay of psychological contract research (Robinson, 1996) and provides a stable basis to understand a functioning agreement between the employee and the organization. Maintenance of trust reveals one explanation for the exchange of autonomy for productivity and availability observed in this study, but beyond this an expression of

gratitude for the teleworking opportunity emboldens the explanation of the exchange in a new direction.

6.4.1 Gratitude: A Different Way of Feeling an Obligation

Cain et al. (p. 441, 2019) define workplace gratitude as: "the tendency to notice and be *thankful for how various aspects of a job affect one's life" and* the pressing aspect from the current study would be autonomy. Fehr et al. (2017) divide the episodic gratitude that is often researched and is a direct consequence of an action and a persistent gratitude that they define as: *"a stable tendency to feel grateful within a particular context" (p. 363).* The definition of persistent gratitude fits well with the ongoing nature of telework and the autonomy exchange present in this study.

Gratitude emerged from the data in several forms and spanning both the experience of autonomy and knowing that one has been afforded the opportunity. Firstly, it became apparent that trust from line managers to telework led to gratitude from employees:

> *"So, yes, as far as I was concerned it was a win/win situation, having never been allowed to work from home before, having the opportunity to be able to do it was a real blessing."* (Dilbert, Regional Intelligence Analyst, 63)

Secondly, the participants acknowledged that they are in a fortunate position compared to others:

> *"I think it's pretty good! I'm very positive it about it and feel very lucky. I know what it looks like in other business areas and organizations and I'm well aware that I'm in a fairly cushty position."* (Anna, Analyst, 41)

And finally, that the increased involvement that the teleworker can have in their home life is something to be grateful for:

> *"I'm just really lucky that it works really well, the flexibility is there and I'm just in a position where it's not questioned. Now, within another organization that provide flexibility, it might be questioned a bit more, I don't know. They are very aware that family comes first, so unfortunately if one of my children is ill and I have to be at home to look after them or any other circumstances, I've got that, and I know I've got*

that. So, for me, that's, kind of, priceless, being able to not worry about that, that's not to say that's something that's on offer anywhere else." (Gail, Business Manager, 50)

Therefore, gratitude in this sample is felt in response to flexibility from the organization, and highlighted through comparison against others and the ability to give more to teleworkers' home lives. To understand how this affects the deal between the employee and the organization it needs to be shown that obligation and gratitude are interwoven to some extent when examining human behaviour, with gratitude appearing as a more moral and emotional way of feeling an obligation (Watkins et al., 2006), which in turn made the obligation feel less effortful. This provides a new potential to examine the psychological contract in a more specific way to how it is felt when conceptualising an obligation, which can be quite removed from the teleworker's direct experience. The motivational implications associated with feeling obliged to reciprocate versus gratefully reciprocating are quite different, and further underlines the power of autonomy in driving the teleworkers' psycholgical contract.

By approaching gratitude as an explanation to how teleworkers are motivated to enact their obligations, it can be cross-referenced against Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci, Connell and Ryan, 1989; Gagné and Deci, 2005). Gratitude in some parts of the study appeared paradoxical at first glance, where teleworkers showed gratitude in the face of a series of direct negative consequences from their working pattern. However, it began to appear that gratitude was shown because telework was the better option of those available, even if all of the outcomes of teleworking were not always favourable to the employee's well-being.

Trust and gratitude create a solid base from which beliefs are constructed, but do not explain a full psychological contract exchange or explain why a teleworker continues to provide extra effort in terms of productivity and availability. The study has many cases were teleworkers continue overworking regimes for many years, therefore the discussion will continue into the role of willingness within the exchange.

6.4.2 Willingness: An Underutilised Concept to Explain the Felt Experience of Telework Obligations

To be willing is defined by Mertens (2020, p. 24) as an *"Autonomous phenomenon of consciousness"* that powers one's actions, as a concept in itself, willingness is underrepresented in organizational literature, described more often under the umbrella of work motivation (Pinder, 2014). Willingness to work is discussed as a superior measure to job productivity than motivation and satisfaction as it is seen to be more directly related to the actual process of doing work (Sjöberg, 2007). Within telework, willingness has been used to understand who is willing to undertake teleworking (Wicks, 2002) or how open they are to seeking help when engaged in teleworking (Golden and Schoenleber, 2014), rather than how willingness explains the obligatory nature of teleworking behaviour.

Participants' responses resonated most soundly with the concept of being willing, and willingness was shown as a key feature to the exchange process, explaining to some degree the felt obligation associated with going above and beyond what was expected of them:

> *"…like last night I was sending a couple of emails and at like half nine because there's like that thing of because you're at home it's almost not that you feel obligated but you're more willing to do it because it just.. it's almost amalgamated my home and my work, it's made me like more responsible and responsive, I think, for my role."* (Rose, Regional Student Recruitment Coordinator, 25)

Teleworking brought about willingness almost subconsciously, as in the quote above, and in many instances as a direct result of the teleworking deal:

> *"So I've got a… we have a fourth bedroom. So that's my office and office space. I used it as a dressing room as well, I think on those days on, I just find it hard to get out of it. So sometimes, I'll carry on, working 'til midnight on the bad days. So, it's like a blessing and a curse because overall, I think those working from home days are really valuable. I wouldn't give them up."* (Angela, Senior Solicitor, 28)

The expression of willingness from the sample leant toward the teleworker committing extra work performance. The manifestations varied depending on the teleworkers home sharing situation (see Table 5.2 for a breakdown) with single or partnered participants

expressing tendencies to engage in behaviours such as logging on earlier, often using travel time for work, or replying to emails quickly. Parental participants who had extra responsibility were often willing to split their working day around child pick-up and care, logging back on in the evening or at weekends to keep up with work, even if this exceeded the number of hours if they were office based. These examples show that teleworkers are willing to work for longer to maintain both a lifestyle choice and family commitments.

Linking to the earlier section on trust, it appeared that in most cases showing willingness was the precursor to receiving trust from the organization. The reciprocal nature of willingness is also suggested by Lambooij et al. (2007) who posits willingness as a reaction to supportive behaviour from managers. Certainly, many participants that were in early career stages or new to teleworking actually showed this behaviour in reverse, with desire to prove themselves before settling into their telework arrangements:

> *"I think there was an element of having to prove myself and show that I might not be there but I'm still sending emails and calling you and communicating. Although I think that did help a lot. I think at the beginning I had to request it [telework]. It wasn't every week. I had to ask if it was alright for me to work from home on this day this week, and they'd say, 'Yes'. Then eventually it went on for so many weeks that they said I didn't need to ask for permission anymore and it just became how I worked."* (Poppy, Head of Communications, 32)

Additionally, willingness to exceed role expectations also manifested within teleworking, even when not as a result of a teleworking exchange. For example, a participant that wished to show he was capable in a new role took on extra work to show his competency, this extra work was then completed whilst teleworking. Although overworking to impress could also take place in the office, participants noted that organizational cues to stop working were present in the office, but absent at home, making it easier to complete extra work tasks when teleworking. The elasticity of the temporal boundary that telework gives to employees can increase the burden of workload as participants added work on the ends of their days to complete tasks:

> *"I mean, I'm trying to be much better at saying no to commitment, that I know I can't do, I use my diary a lot more. I block off hours to complete even menial tasks such as*

doing your expenses and stuff like that because this is the kind of thing which you know, drags your workday into like, 10pm. You might fill your day to 5pm move like work tasks, then all of the other stuff, whether it be like a catch up with your boss or anything else, that kind of like extends your working hours and extends your week to overlap." (Stephen, IT Consultant, 27)

Initially taking on the extra work made this teleworker appear more capable and productive to their new employers, but when reality bit the effects of overwork and invasion on home time was seen to be of detriment to the teleworker's well-being and ability to handle their job. This behaviour is situated in the field of 'leaveism' (Hesketh and Cooper, 2014; 2017) where work is undertaken in times of leave or other periods of unpaid time.

The need to exceed expectations at work was inherently implicit within the sample, bar the occasional example that showed line managers asking too much of employees when they were at home, in these rare examples, participants had been unhappy or unwilling to take part in increased work demands:

"You don't know if you're going to finish at six that day, if you're going to finish at nine or ten, you might have dinner plans but often you have to make changes. I did say no, this one instance I had this one chap who just was like, 'Can I have a quickchat?', you pick up the phone at six on Valentine's Day, and he says, 'I'm having a call in two hours and you must be on it, I need you'… I'm in a situation where I'm relatively new to a company and I have these guys being like... because it's kind of the culture is like, you do what you can for the company, and at that point I was just like, no. I'm not gonna do that one. I got no response and haven't spoken to him since. I think I was probably struck off his list but I kind of think that's a good thing." (Stephen, IT Consultant, 27)

The fact that exceeding work productivity norms occurred so regularly when it wasn't explicitly asked for may suggest willingness (which was how it was often presented by participants), but we can see from the above quote how organizations contest teleworkers' non-work commitments and expect willingness to serve the organization. When teleworkers are so willing to put in effortful contributions to maintain their autonomy, an avenue to

exploitative working practices opens up. This can be noted in the experience of Louise as she recalls the difficulties of avoiding stress when working remotely:

> *"That's the difficult one because work can overload and if you say yes too much then you can get stressed, which is something I'm quite bad at, is just saying yes to too much work. But actually, when it gets to a point where you've got too much to do and have to start saying no to things and then telling people, right, you can't give me any more work. This is it. This is my limit, otherwise I'm going to be working all hours of every single day.*
>
> Researcher: *Did it take a little while to get to that point?*
>
> *It comes in cycles and I think for me, it will always come in cycles. I'll think I'm fine and then everything could just creep up, creep up... I'm working too many hours; I'm not seeing my partner enough and then, right, I need to stop need to step back a little bit and then start the process again."* (Louise, Service Delivery Manager, 31)

Louise's internal willingness leads to an increased workload and although cognisant of the potential detrimental effects appears resigned to this being their pattern of work. The fact that Louise exhibits high levels of productivity and accepts additional work is favourable for the organization's goals and by leaving Louise to manage her workload autonomously they may feel they are maintaining their end of the psychological contract, but they are also setting off a potentially exploitive spiral of overworking for the teleworker. Rather like gratitude, willingness offers a further nuance to understanding how obligations are felt and experienced in psychological contracts. Traditionally, obligations have been used to explain the motivation to exchange in the psychological contract, where obligations in psychological contract research are beliefs such that employees feel they 'should' be reciprocating, and so the motivation in SDT terms is again external and of a controlled kind, experienced as somewhat effortful and done so that it maintains the contributions that employees put into their psychological contracts. Willingness, however, runs contrary to this explanation, presenting as an internal motivation and one that is more freely given, which is very consistent with the idea of autonomy. The discussion in section 8.1.3.1 of this thesis will look deeper into how willingness to operate as a teleworker and the associated heightened

demands of productivity and availability can be explained through internally regulated processes, such as Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci and Ryan, 2012).

6.4.3 Reputation: Cultivating a Reliable and Present Teleworking Reputation

Teleworkers within the sample were keen to portray themselves, particularly to those they work with, as being capable, productive and available. Linda embodies this by being proud of the reputation she has crafted:

> *"I guess the other bit I've got a reputation of being always-on it, being the best in the job that I do and people know that they can always get me so there's no issue. That's why the person who's coming in kind of expecting some different, expecting access to diaries and certainly expecting us to go in the office, I really challenge that because nobody can EVER say that they can't get hold of me. She said, 'Well, I think we need to be more visible'. No we don't, because we.. people don't need to talk and if she wants efficiency, then me being in the office is not efficient.*
>
> Researcher: *You're quite proud of that reputation?*
>
> *Yes… Yeah, I mean, it would be sad having been a senior manager to not be able to do what I'm doing now with my eyes shut"* (Linda, Social Worker, 57)

Linda uses her reputation as a bargaining chip in her on-going disagreement with her new manager that threatens her autonomy, making it clear that removing her teleworking status would not improve her performance.

Beyond presenting a good reputation for certain reasons, as with Linda's example, reputation for teleworkers was normally an issue of fighting against a somewhat bygone concept of what it is to be a teleworker. This negative perception still resonates with members of this sample:

> *"There were people that I knew that I would just never be able to get hold of when they were having a working from home day. Because they weren't really doing anything… [Impersonating fellow teleworker] 'Okay, I hope you're all okay today. I'm*

working on this. I won't be available until three o'clock, if you try and get hold of me, because I'm walking the dog.'" (Sven, Sales Manager, 46)

We cannot be sure of the accuracy of Sven's assessment of his former colleagues, but prevailing fears that teleworkers 'slack off' at home has been present almost from its inception (Jovanis, 1983), despite continued evidence to suggest teleworkers are more productive and work for longer when at home (Martin and MacDonnell, 2012). However, rather than directly challenging these assumptions, teleworkers from this sample often engaged in some form of 'flagging up' that they are working, attempting to increase their visibility to the organization:

> *"I think there was an element of having to prove myself and show that I might not be there but I'm still sending emails and calling you and communicating."* (Poppy, Head of Communications, 32)

Visibility was sought by the participants from the sample to help stave off any negative reputation, particularly those less experienced in teleworking or in lower ranking positions. However, it was also observed in a participant with over twenty years of experience with the same employer, suggesting once ingrained that the tendency is hard to shake. The desire to appear available and working links to presenteeism literature, but in a virtual sense, teleworker's work on through lunches, illness and other scenarios to ensure they are visible workers. Virtual presenteeism, a new concept in organizational studies (Lordan, 2020; Ruhle and Schmoll, 2021), and its impacts will be further discussed later in this thesis.

Another example of a teleworker suffering under the burden of a bad reputation came from Rose who is new to teleworking, but believes her office-based colleagues judge her differently:

> *"I know that they think we work in our pyjamas and things like that… I've heard them joke about it, like oh Lori, my colleague [who also teleworks], in her pyjamas like when she's having a Skype meeting… sometimes it's true, sometimes it's not true though and yeah I suppose they do see us differently. It might be a bit of jealously actually."* (Rose, Student Recruitment Coordinator, 25)

This type of interaction exemplifies the experimental findings of Bos et al. (2004) who observed the equivalent of teleworkers as becoming members of an out-group due to the actions of those sharing a physical working space. The secondary findings of Bos et al. denote that teleworkers then band together into their own group, this is exemplified as Rose is defensive of her colleague and labels the office workers as jealous of the teleworker's arrangement. Those in out-groups at work may find stunted opportunities for progression and increased isolation (Northouse, 2021), two topics particularly pertinent to teleworkers.

Although not all of these types of interaction are taken seriously in the cohort, Dilbert, who is also new to teleworking, brushes it off as banter:

> *"We get on really well and he will jokingly say 'I hope you're not watching Jeremy Kyle' or something like that. It's just implicit, it's just humour and banter, so he knows I'm working and it really isn't an issue."* (Dilbert, Regional Intelligence Analyst, 63)

Teleworking tenure is no guide to who feels the pressure of a negative reputation towards teleworking however, Jeff, a senior manager, has been teleworking for decades and makes a point earlier in his interview that although he works for a technology company and his organization have been ahead of the curve for telework infrastructure, he still struggles to shake these misconceptions:

> *"Okay, so my Friday now, I'm logging in at nine o'clock. I'm logged on all day and what I've tended to find is when you work remotely, when you work from home, you work longer, and you work harder. Don't ask me why. It's just it's a psychological thing in the back your mind because you're not physically in the office. People may or may not think oh he's outside mowing the lawn or he's down the pub having a beer or he's popped out for some lunch, so there's always a psychological thing in the back of your mind that you want to be as visible as you possibly can when you work remotely, rightly or wrongly." (Jeff, Sales Manager, 48)*

Millie believes that teleworking tenure is actually a big factor in how teleworkers behave, with only those new to the experience demonstrating the behaviours associated with a negative reputation:

> *"The only thing is there is definitely a learning curve. I mentioned that I wasn't as effective when starting… and I see it in the new starters now, when people start, they just use working from home as an excuse to watch Grey's Anatomy all day and not do any work. Practice and more obligations actually stamps that out pretty quickly."* (Millie, Operational Researcher, 27)

Negative beliefs regarding reputation can appear from many different sources within organizations. Gary demonstrates that separate departments have input on a teleworker's reputation:

> *"So, the people that work in mergers, for example, they seem to want to be in the office all the time, or at least that's what the norm seems to be, and they probably see us as a bit of a, you know, 'Here we go. They never do any work' sort of thing."* (Gary, Economic Manager, 42)

Gary also states in his interview that he wishes to telework without anyone making him feel bad for it, suggesting these aspersions play upon his mind.

The idea that teleworkers are thought to be slothful demonstrates an implicit bias that teleworkers feel a need to counteract, going above and beyond in terms of availability. If reputation represents the external input on what it means to be a teleworker, the following section will display the internalised deliberation of how to telework acceptably.

6.4.4 Guilt: An Internal Regulator

Taking different forms within the study, participants reported feeling guilty because they were afforded an opportunity not open to other colleagues in the office and guilty because teleworking from home meant on occasion not being fully present in their home or work spheres. Guilt has received limited attention in teleworking research, but has been shown to increase the output a teleworker feels they need to produce to 'earn' their privileged position (Gálvez, Martínez, and Pérez, 2011) and also appears, alongside willingness, in self-determination theory research (Deci and Ryan, 2012). The differences in office and home behaviours are exemplified in this quote from Sally:

> *"Sometimes I feel more guilty taking an hour out when I'm working from home, than I might do if I was in work. So, if I was in work I might go out for an hour and get something at the shops or go for a walk, but if I'm working from home, I tend not to do that. I tend to feel a bit more like I've got to physically be there."* (Sally, Directorate Coordinator, 41)

Sally felt the need to be present at home more than when in the office somewhat counterintuitive, as by being remote, teleworkers are away from the office and trusted to be so. This kind of introjected motivation (motivation fuelled by guilt) is stated under self-determination theory, along with intrinsic and identified regulation, where goals and personal values are key to energising autonomous motivation (Gagné and Deci 2005). Guilt for not being present is discussed in previous literature away from telework which demonstrates that overworking can create guilt in employees that do not spend enough time with their families (Hochwarter et al., 2007) or when boundary spanning communications from work invade the home (Glavin, Schieman and Reid, 2011). For the current sample of teleworkers, they experienced this in a bi-directional way, also feeling guilt for not giving enough to the organization:

> *"You're pulled in two directions all the time, which you have to balance so you never quite feel like you're giving enough to work, and you never quite feel you're giving enough to your kid."* (Angela, Senior Solicitor, 28)

The bi-directionality of guilt undermined participant identities of being a good colleague and being a good parent. Both forms of guilt were found to drive an increase in the amount of time teleworkers tried to make themselves available for work. In the former, to skip breaks and extend their days to be available for office-based counterparts, to be shown to be present. In the latter, teleworkers adjusted their schedules to meet demands from work and home, in some cases opening up their entire day to work communications in a trade-off for being unavailable during the school run. Opening up all hours of their day exposes the teleworker to exhaustion and perpetuates the requirements for their peers to do the same.

Gail explains that guilt for not having time to dedicate to care of her children when she is teleworking is internalised as a 'personal guilt':

> *"I think that's the mother, that's the mother side of me. I suppose I feel I need to give my children that attention, I should finish work, shut down, and spend time with the children, so it's a personal guilt. It is quite hard, and I talk to – I've got some other friends who are working mothers, you know, we do find it difficult sometimes, we all have that kind of guilt…."* (Gail, Business Manager, 50)

Internalising negative emotions such as guilt can be a source of poor mental health (Bybee and Quiles, 1998). Fortunately, Gail is able to discuss this emotion with her friends; unfortunately, her friends are experiencing the same feelings.

As with gratitude, guilt opens an alternative entry point into the felt experience of obligations within the psychological contract.

Feeling obliged due to guilt can cause decreased intrinsic motivation to perform job roles in addition to feeling less engaged with tasks, according to self-determination theory, as the motivation becomes introjected as the focus of needs of approval from others comes into play. Introjected motivation is conceptualised as the most externally regulated type of motivation bar fully external motivation (Gagné and Deci, 2005). Referring back to self-determination theory we can posit that guilt is equivalent to introjected regulation, this means that teleworkers' motivation is driven by their sense of guilt and motivated to seek the approval of parties at home or at work (or rather to evade disapproval) by being available whenever required, for home and work. A fuller examination on the influence of self-determination theory for teleworkers in this research will be displayed in section 8.1.3.1 in the discussion chapter.

The facilitators of gratitude, guilt and willingness, specifically help to explain the autonomy exchanges and can be seen to affect the way teleworkers in the sample understood obligations. Taking the quote from Jeff, he exhibits all these qualities when he explains that despite the fact his organization does not engage in micromanagement, he has an obligation to be more productive and available when working from home:

> **Displaying gratitude** *"So, we are fortunate to work for an organization that respects and is supportive of teleworking and homework, but there is the psychological thing [consciousness of teleworking as a perk that needs reverence] in the back your mind always, always has been the twenty odd years I've been in IT sales"*

Displaying willingness *"Where we are fortunate, we can work remotely, but people are still thinking well what's he doing? What are they doing at home, are they being productive, and all that sort of stuff, do you see what I mean*? *So, I think with age, time and experience, its less of a psychological problem at the back of my mind, but I can't argue it's still there… I can't put my finger on why psychologically it's still there at the back of my mind, but it always is, I suppose. I'm a conscientious person."*

Displaying guilt *"I would hate to think that people in the business think on a Friday Jeff's at home he's doing nothing, he's mowing the garden, don't really see a great deal of emails from him and that sort of stuff. I don't know what it is. It will probably always be there, but I think that probably stems from the old world and the old perception of teleworking"* (Jeff, Sales Manager, 48)

This participant was a very experienced teleworker, but still met with a daily mental struggle to live up to his organizational obligations and his teleworking tenure was not a benefit all participants in the research enjoyed. Seeing three distinct themes within one extended quote shows how the facilitators to the autonomy exchange do not work only in isolation, but also together, which goes on to enrich the complexities within the teleworker's psychological contract.

6.4.5 Avoidance of Mockery: Staying Within Implicit Bounds

Throughout the sample, the suggestion that teleworkers could be misconstrued as making a mockery of the practice of teleworking was put forward. Usually with the phrase 'taking the Mick' (or less politely, the 'piss') this referred to as the boundary of what was acceptable when teleworking. A slightly unrefined phrase from within the sample, Ron made the best description of the concept:

"Just your continued efforts [are expected] really so you're not, you know, taking the Mick, that if you're working from home that you're always contactable." (Ron, Demand Planner, 32)

The participant sums up two important points from the autonomy exchange, continued effort (i.e., doing the work) and being always contactable. By adding these concepts, it ties in with the aforementioned concern of a teleworker's bygone reputation for slacking. To

this end, ‘taking the Mick’ was used as a self-check for teleworkers to evaluate how acceptable their adherence to work obligations were, ensuring not to make a mockery of their apparently fortunate working arrangement:

> *“I don’t take the Mickey, it’s one of those things, you know, having the opportunity to be able to work from home I think it’s a trust thing and, obviously, my line manager has to trust that I am actually working.”* (Dilbert, Regional Intelligence Analyst, 63)

These views directly challenge the previously held negative reputations that present teleworkers as lazy or prone to ‘skiving off’ when working away from the office and show a need to make it abundantly clear to their organizations that they are working hard, more so than may be required when working in the same location as their line manager or colleagues. To ensure that they are not seen as taking advantage of their situations, when teleworkers work from home they run the risk of becoming always contactable and diminishing boundaries between work and home lives.

When teleworkers stay within the bounds of ‘Mick-taking’, their organization is, in the mind of the teleworker, obliged to repay this behaviour with autonomy. When afforded to, the teleworker’s freedom and autonomy was filtered through an internal process. This process was shaped by their interactions with their line managers and some of the facilitators presented within this section, most notably against the reputation of teleworking held by others and their sense of guilt for their opportunity. The autonomy-availability exchange then played out within the bounds of acceptability by not ‘taking the Mick’, which formulated the level of productivity and availability the teleworkers gave to the organization.

6.4.6 Policy: Questioning its Usefulness for Teleworkers

Although the implicit nature of psychological contracts is often at the forefront in research, explicit content can make up a large proportion of the employees’ expectations (Conway and Briner, 2002). This study is no different, in particular, there were facilitators that explicitly conveyed to teleworkers through written and verbal communications what was required and shaped the exchange of autonomy for both productivity and availability.

Despite the longevity of teleworking as a positive form of working (Di Martino and Wirth, 1990), there is a lack of consistency of policy at an organizational, and even national level, that teleworking can come in many forms (Hynes, 2014). The Covid-19 pandemic may yet prove to be the biggest shake-up to policies since teleworking began (Okubo, 2020), but when denoting the overarching structure of telework and what is available to participants in this study, organizations differed substantially, as did the teleworker's knowledge of them.

Public sector teleworkers were more informed about the stipulations of their organization's teleworking programs perhaps, as Lance points out, this is because they are used to promote good working conditions:

> *"They can't really compete on price with other people, so they have to look for other ways to entice people or to make people stay. So, they are trying to offer better quality of life than you might get in the private sector and trying to sort of champion that kind of well-being and the way they want employers to be."* (Lance, Data Analyst, 26)

Prominence and clarity on teleworking is shown here as an important aspect for attracting and retaining staff in the public sector. When teleworking policy is clearly set out by the organization, it enables the exchange of autonomy for productivity and availability. However, without reliable policy to provide structure to telework within the exchange, there is more room for ambiguity, such as those within the private sector where understanding was less clear:

> *"So, I think we have a real mixture of views on flexible working and the policy doesn't really support it enough to make it available to everyone. It comes down to your manager's discretion and your manager can pick a phrase from the 'why you can't have it' list in the policy and then I think that's then hard for the employee to challenge it back… So, for me, it kind of ticks the HR future thinking box that, 'We're a family friendly company, we've got this great policy' but when you come to invoke it then I think it then comes down to your line manager's discretion". (Daisy, Lead Business Architect, 41)*

Daisy goes on to state that she speaks on behalf of many in her organization when she states that the policy is not robust enough to create an even playing field for all employees,

with the decisions on telework falling to the line managers' discretion whether or not to enact idiosyncratic deals. These kinds of deal are then more likely to foster other facilitators of the autonomy exchange, such as gratitude and guilt (Garg and Fulmer, 2017).

Teleworking policy, from the recollection of the participants, featured less on the details, such as expectations of work that could be completed from home, but had more focus on when the teleworker would need to be available while teleworking, such as the 10am to 4pm 'core hours' in the public sector, with the teleworker given the autonomy to start late and finish early or vice versa. In the private sector, stipulations could be more contradictory:

> *"You're written eight-thirty to five on one clause and the next clause is that you must do whatever the organization is requiring you to do on any particular day as well. So, there's no line of when you should stop working in your contract and there's no training or guidance"* (Stephen, IT Consultant, 27)

Although not a stipulation based solely on teleworking policy, the participant goes on to explain that whatever policies are in place at the organization tend to be usurped by informal decision making of line managers. Many participants referred to telework policies as something they 'have seen somewhere around' or that they 'can't remember exactly what it entails'. In these cases, it puts more onus on the implicit arrangements sought through line managers that develop after the initial contracts are signed.

6.4.7 Contracts – Questioning their Strength of Meaning for Teleworkers

Teleworking contracts are often neglected in research and in practice (Pyöriä, 2011) and, as with teleworking policy, were reported by teleworkers as highly varied and foggily recalled across the sample. This represented the wider assertion that issuing of telework specific contracts has yet to fully catch on (Peters, Dulk and Ruijter, 2010). As with policy, particulars of the contracts were at times vague:

> *"Oh, it was two years ago now, I can't remember what's in my contract, but I'm pretty sure there was something in there around flexible working. I mean it wouldn't have been you know, I mean, it's not I mean, I'm pretty sure there's something in there around flexibility."* (Justin, Research Assistant, 25)

When there is ambiguity in the understanding of the flexible working contracts, the role of the line manager is even more important. They bring the true meaning of flexibility that is mentioned explicitly in the contract to life through more verbal and implicit communications.

A small number of participants were unable to indicate if they held teleworking or standard contracts, the rest of the sample were split in half between those who did or did not have formally agreed teleworking contracts. Those with clearly defined teleworking contracts usually used the terminology flexible or agile rather than ostensibly teleworking, although they amounted to the same thing when including spatial flexibility. Within this sub-set of 'contracted teleworkers', adherence to what was in the contract was variable, often relying on more informal arrangements:

> *"I think the main thing it says is 'we encourage flexible working and can fit around your commitments' but it definitely has to be agreed with your line manager to be able to deliver your role, because everybody's role is slightly different so for some people it's fine for them to work* out of the *office but some do need to be there a bit more."* (Poppy, Head of Communications, 32)

And flexible working for the other half who did not have agreed formal teleworking contracts depended entirely on informal agreements:

> *"I guess, that's why I, sort of, use the term flexible working rather than anything more formal, because it is very much an agreed arrangement for me, so to speak. If I wanted to mandate that every Tuesday I worked from home, then that would have to be a formal conversation and my contract would be adjusted…"* (Gordon, Resiliency Manager, 41)

Beyond the general notion that contracts for teleworkers were vague and gave additional clout to the decision making of line managers, we are able to tease apart how contracts helped to facilitate teleworking. Contracts in around half of the study often performed the role of a stepping stone and, once flexible working status was achieved, the details of where and when the work would be performed could be arranged with their line manager:

"Flexibility in my contract surrounds sort of my hours, which allows me to do ten days' worth of hours in nine, so I have formally have a day off every two weeks. Where I do those hours isn't formally in a contract, it's sort of agreement between me and my line manager to be agreed via email type thing in writing." (Ruby, Policy Advisor, 26)

The group that had formal teleworking contracts were afforded the back-up of their arrangements in writing and it helped to provide the bones of which to lay their teleworking arrangements on. However, the difference between formal and informal contracts in practice was slight and for the psychological contract provided little additional obligation. Furthermore, teleworkers without explicit teleworker contracts showed ambivalence to making them formal:

"Yeah with the thing in the contract it now officially says my hours are something like eight-thirty to five Monday to Thursday and nine to three on Friday to make sure you get the supposed hours you work.

Researcher: *How did that make you feel saying 'you have to do the hours'?*

My job has notional hours and then you have the hours you actually work... It was just a thing I glossed over as I was going to work the hours anyway so it didn't really matter to me." (Simon, Software Developer, 42)

Drawing together the mix of ambivalence, ambiguity and indifference on the impact of teleworking contracts, their importance is questioned by this study.

6.5 Research Question One Summary

This section forms the largest part of the findings chapter. The length of this section is testament to the range of contents elements featured within the teleworkers' psychological contract and the importance of the dimensions presented. By examining these individual instances of behaviour and grouping them accordingly, the researcher is able to ascertain several points that impact teleworkers based on their increased autonomy.

Unanimous agreement in qualitative research is rare, therefore it must be taken note of when it occurs. The entire sample of teleworkers refuted the opportunity to relinquish their

working pattern - they showed a clear reluctance to give up their teleworker status – demonstrating the high desirability of teleworking even with its associated costs. This reveals that the teleworkers in the sample hold the benefits of teleworking in high regard, most notably avoiding commuting and the ability to schedule more familial and other non-work undertakings, the latter enabled through increased levels of autonomy. Therefore, autonomy is a hugely prized and important expectation in a teleworkers' psychological contract, with clear implications on what teleworkers are prepared to contribute to secure ongoing teleworking and autonomy. However, this autonomy comes with some perceived drawbacks, namely; overwork – due to autonomy for performance and being always-on – due to autonomy for availability. These elements combine with an adoption of a new norm of working – due to increased accessibility of teleworking within their organizations.

Overwork and telework went hand in hand for the sample, not seeming to overtly diminish the desirability of the teleworking arrangement. The increased autonomy could potentially explain why overwork was accepted, it was still somewhat under the control of the teleworker, it was their own crafted version of overwork, a far cry from being chained to the desk until 10pm. The teleworkers' overwork could be Sunday afternoon, an early start instead of commuting or as a substitute for scrolling through Facebook in the evenings, all of which were cited by participants in the sample.

The new norm that teleworkers have created through their behaviours and experienced through the behaviour of others will be further illuminated as we progress through the remaining research questions, but so far it can be ascertained that more is given by the teleworker when teleworking. What is given is displayed within productivity and availability, in exchange for, but also made possible by, increased autonomy. This suggests that productivity and availability is not demanded directly by the organization, but evolves often implicitly due to the obligations and expectations demanded of modern teleworking. In this research it is important to understand how the facilitators enable the exchange previously discussed in this chapter, which shapes how the obligations are experienced. Understanding the way obligations are felt as a motivational experience is a new insight into psychological contract literature.

Self-determination theory was also shown in this chapter as a complementary tool to understand how the psychological contract content elements of willingness, guilt and gratitude influence the teleworkers' motivation in the autonomy exchange.

RQ2 introduces the central tenet of technology, specifically the role it plays in the psychological contracts of teleworkers.

6.6 Research Question Two - What role does Technology play in Teleworkers' Psychological Contracts?

Whilst the current research concluded in early 2020, the prominence of teleworking in organizations skyrocketed shortly afterwards with the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic. It brought remote working technology into everyday discussion with Zoom and other online video communication products becoming part of everyday parlance, whilst Microsoft Teams and Slack were being advertised on mainstream television. Academically, the research into the effect technology plays in telework has always been of utmost importance with the latter strongly influencing the former (Ellison, 2004; Golden, 2009; Huws, 1991), and the application of the latest advances in technology significantly altering the experience for the teleworker (Suh and Lee, 2017).

Having ascertained the autonomy exchange and supporting mechanisms of the teleworker's psychological contract under research question one, this section of research findings will aim to present the role of technology. How the speed and ubiquity of technology alters working behaviours and patterns and how this affects the process of creating and maintaining teleworker psychological contracts will be assessed.

Having suitable technology enables teleworking to happen. There are many elements now available to the teleworker in order to perform their roles well and the additional benefits technology-powered teleworking provided. Across the sample, the positives from telework varied. For example, less commuting, working to your own rhythm, incorporating socialising, working to your preferred body clock, and parents benefitting their families. In a broad sense, the technology that teleworkers use on a daily basis enables all of these positives to take place, because without the appropriate technology, teleworking would not be feasible.

In what follows, the context of technology usage within the sample will be described before presenting insights into how technology has become one of the key drivers of teleworkers' productivity and availability. Consequences of which are 'virtual presenteeism', a concept where employees continue to work remotely when unwell or under stressful conditions, especially relevant during the times of Covid-19 (Kinman and Grant, 2021) and how this reinforces and is reinforced by the wider always-on culture of the current working world.

Recognising how technology facilitates the contributions made by teleworkers set out under the contents of the psychological contract covered in research question one will help to deepen understanding of telework.

6.7 Current Context of Technology Usage in the Sample

Instrumental to teleworking is the appropriate technological equipment (Golden, 2009). This research took place in the UK in late 2019 and early 2020, with the teleworkers operating in fully modernised settings with access to broadband internet, although speeds varied slightly. All participants were IT literate and able to use the range of technology and software required for their roles. Participants recognised that devices and internet connections needed to be on par or just below the standard of the office when teleworking.

Generally, the expectation was that the organization would provide the 'basics' of hardware required to perform their roles, a laptop and a smartphone and occasionally a tablet. The smartphone was sometimes merged as a personal device, sometimes kept separate (see literature review section 3.4.1 for further information on segmenting and integrating). Secondary needs such as extra screens or printers varied in availability dependent on the organization, although ergonomic/disability needs were covered by the firms for those teleworkers who required it. For software, the participants used elements of the Microsoft suite (Word, Excel, Outlook) or equivalents provided by their organizations. Furthermore, team working apps such as Teams, Slack and Google equivalents were common, as was Skype and Zoom for virtual meetings. In addition, selected workers used a range of specialist software which they were also able to access remotely such as R, Tunnel and Stata. Negotiation on equipment was arranged through organizational policies rather than line manager negotiations.

An important feature of the technology used by the current sample was the application of hyperconnected technology, which will be sketched out as background information.

6.8 Use of Hyperconnected Technology

As previously discussed in the literature review, hyperconnected technologies increase the speed of connectivity and the richness of data available (Swaminathan et al., 2020). Furthermore, there are several key features with extra pertinence to teleworking. 'Always-on culture' is cited by Fredette et al. (2012), as is the increased accessibility to complex information and advancement in the levels of interactivity now possible over digital means. Within the sample there were a selection of features that related clearly to concepts of hyperconnected teleworking, including digital replacements for face-to-face interaction and dissolution of the work-life boundary.

Elements of hyperconnected teleworking received much positive reflection, particularly as an easy way to increase productivity:

> *"I was at home, my manager was at his home and the other person we had in the three-way conversation with was in an office, not in the same office block that I work in. So that saved time, saved money, and we got everything done and then we could see documents that way as well, so it was ideal."* (Trevor, Analyst, 58)

However, they also blurred work and home boundaries. This is not a new phenomenon (Gant and Kiesler, 2002; Köffer et al., 2015) but teleworkers, now generations on from their forebears, still work through the same issues:

> *"So, sometimes it is that case of, if you're spinning too many plates, and one goes, and I think that's a moment when you just have to have a bit of a self-check, and think, well, wait a minute, this is getting a bit out of hand, and I need to revisit. Sometimes, you can get carried away, so like you say, with checking emails, at other times when I'm not officially working, and if I'm not careful, if that has stretched out, to then self-regulate."* (Susanne, PA to Head of a Private School, 41)

Being hyperconnected does not only represent the type of communication, for example email, but the expectations in a hyperconnected society are such that responses to emails become expected around the clock. Problems can be amplified when the organization, or colleagues within the organization send communications outside of traditional working hours:

"I used to get email notifications and I'd be on the train home or into work. Some people work very flexible hours so they'll work ten-six or they'll work in the evenings as well as they do compressed working weeks, so you could easily get an email at eleven at night… I do think last year I put work first a lot and got into a bad habit of looking at work emails and working longer hours and that's just not sustainable; this time last year I was completely burnt out." (Poppy, Head of Communications, 32)

Without adequate knowledge inside the organization to control the intrusive side of hyperconnected technologies, the teleworker can be forced into a difficult pinch point. Despite long standing knowledge of these difficulties for teleworkers (Turnage, 1990), better understanding of how to manage these occurrences is still of the utmost importance to creating a fair and stable arrangement, particularly for those with childcare responsibilities.

Furthermore, when the quality of the technology did not always meet the hyperconnected standard there was a disconnect between expectation and reality, leaving the teleworker distressed:

"the technology… it's still not great… what makes me look bad sometimes is I have problems with my telephone and it happens in the office as well, but it happens more often at home because of the way their software is set-up. So whenever I leave the office and go home the software does something really funny, where it changes the settings and so whenever a client then calls me for the first time in the morning and I'm working from home, I can never hear them and it looks really bad and it just makes me look bad, so that is really annoying because I mean, I don't know if I'm extra sensitive to looking bad because I'm working from home, but you are just so desperate for it to be as smooth as possible. Because you just want to look so in control when you're working from home, you're so keen to look like you've got everything in hand and not make it look a shambles. So, I hate it if my boss calls me and I'm working from home and I pick up and he can't hear me or I can't hear him because the phone setting has gone screwy… that is embarrassing and I kick myself when that happens, but sometimes it's cos the telephone system is dodgy." (Angela, Senior Solicitor, 28)

Being technically capable whilst teleworking appeared to hold importance for the teleworker, not only as a functional tool, but as a means for the teleworker to represent themselves as the wish to be seen by their organization and clients. Specifically, this demonstrates that working from home is a good option for the teleworker in the eyes of the organization, important in ensuring the arrangement will be allowed to continue.

Hyperconnected technologies, with their instant and remote access to information coupled with the super-fast interconnectedness of individuals, are deeply interwoven into the findings of this research question – one of the consequences of the push to be more available will now be discussed: the phenomenon of 'virtual presenteeism'.

6.8.1 The Implicit Demands of Virtual Presenteeism in Hyperconnected Teleworking

The concept of virtual presenteeism has overlaps in the current research with increased availability. Here the researcher would like to differentiate the two in the following ways:

Increased availability is seen as an obligation, as part of the psychological contract that is exchanged for increased autonomy. It can been seen as a conscious decision-making process to trade time for autonomy and can be increased or decreased at the teleworker sees fit.

Virtual presenteeism can be seen as a continuation of this process beyond the tit-for-tat trade off into a more endemic working behaviour, which becomes part of the teleworkers work ethic and identity – virtual presenteeism can also occur quickly based upon presumptions of what is expected of teleworking. These presumptions can be influenced by the wider always-on culture that is prolific in the modern day (Newey, 2021).

As participants were not asked directly about sickness behaviour, this project also approaches presenteeism from a progressive perspective and looks to advance the understanding of the term in a fast-moving technological age. Focusing on virtual presenteeism as an act of over availability to promote a positive appearance to the organization at times when they would not be required to be working. Therefore, this research follows on to open the virtual presenteeism definition in the same way as Ruhle et

al. (2020) suggests. It appears serendipitous that as more traditional work become virtual so must follow more virtual presenteeism - in all its guises.

Presenteeism, virtual or otherwise also appears to relate strongly to an internal process (Cooper and Lu, 2019), this appears to suggest that presenteeism is not only fuelled by the organization, but also by internal dialogue of what other may think or perceive, as found in the current research. Cooper and Lu (2019) linked presenteeism from internal motivation as a 'good' type of excessive work behaviour that linked to positive well-being outcomes. They go on to present SDT as a method of explaining why an objectively stressful action, like undertaking excessive produces 'good' outcomes.

Virtual presenteeism occurred from the inception of the teleworking arrangement for many in the sample. However, the compulsion shown by teleworkers to be seen as working often ebbed away fairly quickly with more experience, starting with examples of two early career teleworkers:

> *"I remember the first couple of times I worked from home I was very like oh gosh, like, I replied to emails instantly so he [her boss] knew I was working, knew I was online… 'I remember emailing him once and I was like I forgot to open my Outlook, I promise I was working' and he was like, 'I know you were working, its fine, its fine.'"* (Jenna, Social Research Officer, 23)
>
> *"Initially when I started it was my first proper job, I think I perceived, felt the need to justify my time at home, but now I treat it as if it's the same as when I'm in the office.*
>
> Researcher: *What do you think about that initial feeling of needing to justify your working from home?*
>
> *The mere fact that I was waking up, moving two feet to my desk, turning my laptop on and just the fact that I haven't had to do much to start working. I think that it's quite easy to have on your mind that being at home is tangibly different than being at the office and I think peoples' mentalities may be different"* (Jackson, Operation Research Analyst, 25)

Both Jenna and Jackson go on to describe how virtual presenteeism was a transient phase for them and they now operate in a similar way from home as they did in the office,

confident that they have proved themselves and feel trusted to execute their roles remotely by their managers.

However, 'growing out' of this stage, like progressing from a probationary period, is not guaranteed. When asked if she feels obliged to do anything differently when working from home Gail makes it clear through expressive language that she is glued to her computer throughout a teleworking day:

> *"I suppose, obviously with technology these days, obviously having Teams and Skype and what have you, people have got visibility of you, so people can see you. So, I felt more obliged to be glued to my laptop, as it were, just in case I did miss a particular email or I did miss a particular call, and that's that really, just making sure everyone knew I was physically there, I was available.*
>
> Researcher: *And was it something that was just when you began working or was it something that you continued, the need to feel that visibility?*
>
> *Something I've continued… So, yes, just more conscientious, I think. Again, I think because it goes back to this whole massive flexibility, that makes me feel like, ok, I'm here, knuckle down, keep going."* (Gail, Business Manager, 50)

Interestingly, behaviours which some of the cohort felt faded with experience have stayed on for Gail. A combination of her conscientious nature and the need to show virtual presenteeism leads her to knuckle down and keep working, perhaps in an attempt to maintain the level of autonomy she is afforded, going the extra mile helps to defend her position in the autonomy exchange. Conscientiousness also plays a role for Angela when she evaluates how long she can spend away from her home office:

> *"When it comes to having a break like going to the loo or having lunch I try and do it all quite quickly to get back to my desk cos I don't want any long period where my boss rings and I don't answer even though I'm legitimately going to the toilet or having lunch, which I would do in the office. I mean luckily my boss recently said to me, 'You know if I ring, and you don't answer, don't worry I know you are working, I know you're really committed.' You know, if you're in the office, you wouldn't be in your room all the time, you'd go to the toilet. So, he says, you know I know you're a*

consciousness person, he's known me for years, so I think he's been quite keen to show me that he gives me the benefit of the doubt. He's got my back and he supports me." (Angela, Senior Solicitor, 28)

As we saw with the first quote in this section where Jenna used to panic about not checking her emails, Angela worries about her responsiveness. The obligation that Angela feels to be present when at home goes beyond an implicit demand, her manager actively reassures her which she accepts and understands, but her virtual presenteeism runs unabated as an internal process, whereas Jenna's example showed that she realised there was no need to worry and adapted. Angela is cognisant of the fact that taking breaks is acceptable when she is at work, but feels differently when at home, perhaps due to the inherent lack of visibility when working remotely. It is the unknown periods that the teleworker may or may not have been working that leads to the desire to appear present. Potential explanations for the difference between these participants could be the level of responsibilities that these employees hold, with Jenna being far more junior in her role than Angela. Alternatively, the difference could be explained by inherent conscientiousness which was noted throughout Angela's interviews and not in the same frequency or with the same strength of feeling for Jenna.

It is somewhat comparable to the classic thought experiment from the Erwin Schrodinger devised in 1935 which supposed that a cat in a box with a flask of radioactive material was simultaneously dead and alive until someone checked what happened inside the box. When teleworking, in the mind of the manager the teleworker is both working and loafing, without a way to tell which (bar intrusive surveillance which is absent in this study and in itself has flaws), although supervisors and managers are often trusting (as in Angela's case) the teleworker feels the pressure to remain 'alive'. In psychological contract terms, it is the debate of balancing employer trust versus explicit monitoring; while no participants reported explicit monitoring, some were aware of the need to engage in increased availability (which is signaled by a perceived virtual presenteeism culture for teleworkers) in order to maintain the trust of their line manager.

Judging as this process was exhibited by different participants, in different contexts across the sample, one potential determining factor that separates a natural urge to impress a new manager and the potentially dangerous ongoing virtual presenteeism is the internal

conscientiousness of the teleworker and how that can overwhelm them into overwork. Warr and Inceoglu (2012) previously connected that the personality trait of conscientiousness was an indicator of enhanced job engagement, mirroring the behaviours that extend to virtual presenteeism in the current study. With hyperconnected technologies encouraging increased availability, teleworkers have more chance of losing balance of their availability for autonomy exchange.

Engaging in virtual presenteeism would naturally suggest an increase in conflicting obligations for teleworkers, if persistently present and engaged in work throughout the day, including lunchtimes, any need within the home sphere will inherently lead to a conflict as it threatens to unbalance the autonomy exchange. In traditional presenteeism literature examples of overwork leading to burnout and illness are noted (Demerouti et al., 2009; Widera, Chang and Chen, 2010), here the researcher would like to draw attention to the impact virtual presenteeism can have as a precondition to burnout, fatigue and illness as it sets and facilitates unhealthy work demands upon the teleworker and this topic will be revisited under the fourth research question findings on well-being effects.

Now it has been established that virtual presenteeism arrives through implicit means rather than direct managerial or organizational expectation, the following sections will look at how technology use by the participants in the sample supported virtual presenteeism and how this relates to always-on culture.

6.8.2 Technologies Driving Increased Availability and Virtual Presenteeism

This section will look to demonstrate the technologies that fuel increased availability in teleworkers and how the concepts of increased availability, virtual presenteeism and always-on culture interacted within the study.

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="4">Hyperconnected Technology

Enables the breakdown of spatial and temporal boundaries for teleworkers</td><td>Teleworker Action
Increased availability</td><td rowspan="4">Autonomy Exchange

Increased availability and its consequences are accepted as an obligation to ensure teleworker autonomy</td></tr>
<tr><td>First consequence
Virtual presenteeism</td></tr>
<tr><td>Organization-wide reinforcement
Always-on culture</td></tr>
<tr><td>Second consequence
Always-on behaviour</td></tr>
</table>

Table 6.1 Fitting availability concepts with hyperconnected technologies and the autonomy exchange

Exchanging autonomy for availability has been demonstrated as key to the teleworker's psychological contract. We will now examine how virtual presenteeism sits as a consequence of increased availability and a stepping stone to being always-on. Traditionally, presenteeism has been driven by managerial actions (Bierla, Huver and Richard, 2011), personal dispositions (Lu, Lin and Cooper, 2013) and cultural factors (Cooper and Lu, 2016), but for virtual presenteeism there are a new range of technological advancements that could further fuel these behaviours from a wider cultural shift (Cunneen and Mullins, 2019). These forces are particularly pertinent to teleworkers as they, of course, work remotely and the following section will ascertain the types of technological drivers that pushed teleworkers to virtual presenteeism behaviours and the concurrent effect this has on their working availability.

Work applications like Teams are an extension and conglomeration of previous technologies, video calling of Skype, chat features of WhatsApp and screen sharing collaboration built in, helping to replicate the office experience remotely. From this sample the type of communications used by teleworkers has developed. Whilst emails were still very popular, there was a rising reliance on a number of team working apps to collaborate.

Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Skype, Web-Ex and Slack were most often reported by sample participants.

This shows that modern businesses are striving to find means of communication that enhance the ability of the team to work collaboratively as a key factor when teleworking. Sample participants noted that these enriched forms of communication enable them to feel closer to colleagues than via a standard email, and increase their availability (and the perceived need to be available) to colleagues:

> *"I think the thing, the big thing that has happened between that mid-2012 point and now, is it's actually really easy to be at home and still be in almost face to face contact with people, because Skype has changed things… the technology enhanced collaborative tools are just so good that I don't think it really matters where you are."* (David, Internal Auditor and Director of Business Assurance, 50)

Bringing people together for a more authentic team working experience is only one way in which connecting people is enacted. On one hand these technological systems, such as skype or more recent Team working apps, recreate collaborative working with less hassle, theoretically freeing up more time for teleworkers to spend with family and minimising their chances of experiencing conflicting obligations at home. Conversely, they also perforate the teleworker's temporal boundaries as work spills over into non-working time and increases teleworkers availability, particularly when trying to remain flexible to international meetings and time differences, which serves as a precondition of potential workplace intrusion on home life. This suggests that technology, if not well managed, can imbalance the work-life equilibrium.

Present for the whole sample was the expectation to attend virtual meetings when working from home:

> *"There might be in some areas a perception that if you're working from home, you can't dial into meetings. So that's a lack of expectation, I don't think it's true, think it's nonsense. I will dial into meetings..."* (Millie, Operational Researcher, 27)

Positives of holding meetings online centred on the ability to get participants together more easily and interact with colleagues from other countries without the need for extensive travel:

> *"I'll take the example of when we were twenty people, we had people in Rome with people in Milan, we had people in Sweden and we had people the UK and we would meet on a regular basis weekly, regular cadence and we did it always over WebEx… we're always kind of working in a digital workspace, such as Teams."* (Stephen, IT Consultant, 27)

The advantages put forth by the sample shows that these applications used for recreating in person interaction are well received at face value. However, some teleworkers did struggle to get colleagues to understand when they are unavailable, particularly teleworkers that work a total of three to four days per week as their home-working and non-working days were treated as the same thing, leading to some incidences of frustration.

The concept of connecting with colleagues outside of traditional hours drove the need to be constantly available, which was felt by many in the sample with a particular skew toward those in the private sector, suggesting organization culture played an impactful role. Teleworkers' communications out of traditional working hours seemed to reflect an acceptance that the working week had been opened out by hyperconnected technologies, which is greeted with gratitude:

> "*My role is predominantly an internal advisor and I can provide that any time of day. The other advantage I have is I can look after European business so can start work at seven in the morning and have someone to talk to. I also look after US business so if I want to do work at seven or eight at night there's always someone to talk to, so it doesn't bother me.*
>
> Researcher: *Would you say there's an element of gratitude in having the ability to do that?*
>
> *Hugely, partly because of what I do as a profession. I think we are now senior and mature enough to look at the week and say, 'there is no working week'."* (Bruce, Regional HR Business Lead, 44)

Bruce protests the case that he and his colleagues are senior enough to understand that there are no set hours in the modern working week and appears unbothered. In another part of his interview, he stated that he previously struggled with over-working and although he appears to have found a happy medium, elsewhere in the sample more entrenched workaholic behaviour was found: *'Whatare you still working for?'*

> *"There have been numerous times where I've been working after hours, and I will receive an email from someone, because they're working late, or my manager is the world's worst at trying to say, 'Don't work when you don't have to'. Because, she's often sending me a message saying,* 'What are *you still working for? ', and I'm saying, 'I could ask you the same question!'"* (Richard, Payroll Consultant, 53) '

Examples like this where the actions of overworking employees rubbed off on one another were frequent within the private sector teleworkers of the sample, proliferated not just on email, but also across the aforementioned team working applications and often manifesting on mobile devices. There was a significant sense that although potentially undesirable, these types of communications, the mediums and devices they arrived through, were par for the course. This is certainly true for Alan, who worked in a global role, and he would need to be available for virtual meetings at unsociable hours:

> *"Because, my role is global then it's not unusual for me to have a few virtual meetings in a month at, what you might call, antisocial hours, four or five in the morning or eight/nine at night, but it's not too often, it's bearable and it comes with the global territory."* (Alan, Global Marketing Executive and Part-Time Church Minister, 50)

Although the thrust of being available at these hours comes through the nature of the role rather than the technology, it can be expedited that being in a face to face video conferencing meeting incurs additional physical and cognitive efforts from the teleworker rather than if they were conducting a voice call (Shockley et al., 2021). This adds additional strain upon working at unsocial hours.

In comparison to the previous examples from the private sector, the public sector workers were encouraged to have more detachment for their devices in their personal time:

> *"Well, there's another thing that we have, it's quite strongly encouraged not to work at weekends or not working stupid hours and a couple of times when I have been online, just to do an odd thing my line manager has noticed the last online [virtual timestamp], eight hours ago and it's nine in the morning or whatever it was and said let's pick up on that."* (Lance, Data Analyst, 26)

The role technology inhabits here is kinder to the teleworker. The manager picks up on the virtual timestamp and uses this to initiate a conversation on overworking. However, the same premise could be used to discuss supposed lack of availability or productivity based upon a supposed earlier timestamp. This creates a subtle opportunity for workplace surveillance and a potential need for teleworkers to flag additional time to prevent misgivings from their manager.

Acceptance and detachment were two diametrically opposed methods of dealing with out of hours communication, but for a large proportion of the sample, a third way was enacted, filtering the type and urgency of incoming information. By filtering communications to a certain extent, teleworkers were able to set-up a personal arrangement that suited both the needs of their job and their personal preferences of communication, such as Susanne's example of checking emails on her day off:

> *"I wouldn't log into systems, but I probably would check my emails, because I could just separate my email accounts, but I have it come in to one so I can just see everything at a glance, but I would probably only check it once or twice a day, and if it happened to be it was a work thing popped up, because if it's urgent, they would hopefully get in touch with me, or realise when I haven't responded.*
>
> Researcher: *So, you feel more comfortable to check now and again than to leave it?*
>
> *I do, yeah. Yeah, I don't like surprises, and I think that's a part-time feeling anyway. I think just generally, when you're part-time person, you sort of feel like you have to be on top of things."* (PA to Head of a Private School, 41)

Matching of personality traits to the levels of responsiveness to communications appeared to be another important factor in understanding how teleworkers chose to raise their

availability to manage their hyperconnected daily lives. More analysis will be given to coping strategies as the thesis progresses, notably under section 7.14 of the findings chapter.

To summarise, unless line managers actively discourage out of hours working and increased availability, the prevalence of hyperconnected, instant access technologies slant teleworkers toward virtual presenteeism. So, with teleworkers already at a predisposition to virtual presenteeism (through technology and examples of self-perpetuation) and already enacting increased availability as part of the autonomy exchange, they have strong chance of over working. In addition to this, there are societal and organizational culture factors to consider which also have an impact on teleworker behaviour. Always-on culture operates as another factor shaping teleworkers' behaviour, signaling the expected norms (Ghislieri et al., 2021). Therefore, reinforced by always-on culture, one of the main consequences of technology's role in teleworker virtual presenteeism became the proliferation of always-on behaviour.

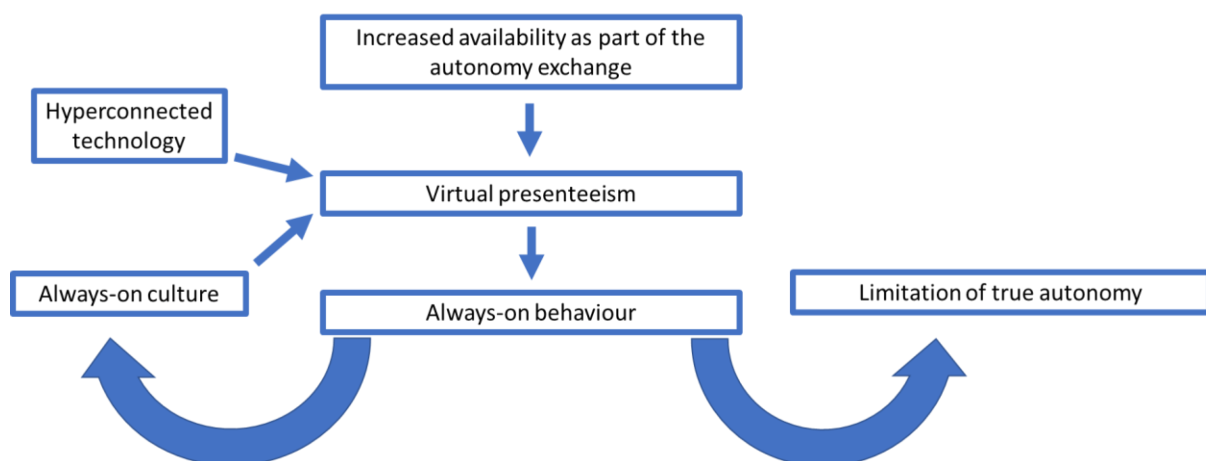

Figure 6.3 Path diagram of teleworker availability behavior

6.8.3 Virtual Presenteeism Consequence - Always-on Culture

As a phenomenon, the concept of always-on sits at a different level to the availability exchange (traded with the organization) and virtual presenteeism (in this study found as an internal dialogue), it is ever present in news reporting on modern working, media representations of overwork and felt as a cultural movement (Kitchen, 2018; Singh, 2014)

When the need for availability becomes chronic, this becomes virtual presenteeism. Virtual presenteeism can then go on to support an always-on culture through the working week

and weekend (Luoma and Penttinen, 2020). Definitions of always-on culture are conspicuous by their absence, but McDowall and Kinman (2017, p. 256) ascertain that: *"A heavy reliance on technology and the need for rapid responsiveness has fuelled the "always-on" culture, whereby people find it difficult to switch off."*

Key features of being always-on also include being able to complete tasks normally reserved for desk work on a mobile or tablet, freedom to work from anywhere thanks to hyper fast broadband and mobile coverage and increased demands communicated from the organization outside of traditional work hours (McDowall and Kinman, 2017). Effects of prolonged always-on behaviours are only recently coming to light, but perceived impacts of this arrangement are feelings of being overwhelmed, burnt out or fatigue (Casserly and Megginson, 2008; Cross, Taylor and Zehner, 2018).

Fatigue is caused by a continuation of an activity beyond a tolerable amount, in the current research that activity is, of course, working. Still a relatively new concept, with scarce direct research, always-on was not mentioned often by participants, but features of always-on behaviour were present across the sample:

> *"I think the commute is a good way of catching away from the office or from the office life where you have like a clear cut… I would argue that probably when you work from home, it's slightly more difficult… I remember all my life I would come home, see the kids, go into bed, and then sit in front of my computer again. So, this also happened many, many, many times… it's not like you leave your factory you leave your spinning machine and you know there is no spinning machine at home you cannot work from home, right? But yeah, I have my spinning machine with me all the time, my computer, so it's just more difficult to do."* (Bernard, Sales Manager, 46)

Bernard's example typified the experience of many within the sample – the technology is always with them, particularly when you remove the commute from the working day. Paradoxically, avoiding the commute was the most common advantage stated for teleworking within the sample, suggesting that the constant companion of the computer was the lesser of two evils. Finding the 'cut' that Bernard alludes to was an important feature of the teleworker's daily planning, which is further attested to by Jeff:

> *"It's difficult sometimes because when you work for a global technology company, you know, in essence, because the technology that we use, you're always-on really, you always feel like you're on. So, you have to, have to log off and say no, I will not look at anything outside of my working hours, or else you're always working."* (Sales Manager, 48)

Jeff was one participant that used the always-on phrasing repeatedly. At another point in his interview, he also noted that he was 'ten years ahead of the game' as he worked for a technology company. He explained that he had been using teleworking for a long period of time before he saw it grow in popularity in other sectors. Following this logic, it is plausible that a discussion of always-on behaviours will seep steadily into parlance across all sectors in years to come.

As suggested by Jeff, being a teleworker and being always-on appear to be inextricably interwoven:

> *"To be honest, I do constantly keep an eye on my emails, so that doesn't bother me, and I have responded to emails quite late at night, sometimes first thing in the morning. So, yes, for me that's not an issue, it's part of my role and, again, it's part of me being responsive.*
>
> Researcher: *Do you always feel an obligation to respond to these work communications?*
>
> *Not always, it depends who they're from. Obviously being remote, whether it's something internally that's quite important that I need to respond to for whatever reason… there are times obviously when I've been on holiday and I'd respond to emails on holiday, but the last holiday I had I purposely.. I had a quick look, because I can't help myself, but I didn't respond."* (Gail, Business Manager, 50)

Gail states that being remote equals the need to be responsive, especially to internal communications, no matter the time of day. Where she does draw the line is holiday time, though the desire to check, if not respond, remains. The always-on concept can be related to a teleworker that does not try and separate their home and work lives, or indeed is unable to. The impacts of integrating or segmenting the telework experience sheds further

light on how teleworkers construct their day-to-day routines with the advanced technology at their disposal and will be covered in further depth the discussion chapter.

For the current research, the effect that always-on behaviour has on autonomy is perhaps the most interesting and indeed, paradoxical. Although influenced by the desire to achieve and maintain high degrees of autonomy, when one has become always-on it is debatable how much autonomy they actually have. These unintended consequences seem to be ignored by teleworkers that exhibit always-on behaviour, suggesting that the *notion* that one has autonomy may be as valuable to them as objectively *possessing* autonomy.

The phenomenon of being always-on requires further exploration. The current research adds to the body of insight by examining always-on behaviour specific to teleworkers and providing the autonomy exchange and presence of virtual presenteeism as contributory factors.

6.9 Research Question Two Summary

The psychological contract is between the employee and their organization, and is most evident in interactions between the employee and individuals that represent the organization (Conway and Briner, 2005). The first and most obvious point to make is that communications that create, fulfil, breach and violate the psychological contract can come through modern communications technology. Noting that the psychological contract does not materialise only as a result of face-to-face interaction is somewhat common sense, so how exactly does hyperconnected communications shape psychological contracts?

Modern technology which enables hyper-connectivity when teleworking can affect the psychological contract in the following ways. Firstly, hyperconnected technologies sets a high level of expectation of availability in the teleworker's psychological contract, increasing the demand for responsiveness and extending the working day to include and extend past commuting time. The level of expectation appears to some extent dependent on whether the participant is in the public or private sector.

Secondly, the autonomy for availability exchange trades time teleworkers should not be working for working time or the appearance of working, in exchange for perceived

autonomy, identified as virtual presenteeism. This behaviour is reinforced by the always-on culture in which the telework operates in. The ramifications of this situation vary based upon how the teleworker copes with these demands.

Finally, gratitude facilitates the autonomy exchange for availability and productivity through the hyperconnected devices and applications, as by having this technology at their disposal teleworkers are able to retain some autonomy in managing how their working day is arranged. Feeling grateful for this ability negates some of the unwelcome working practices seen within the sample, such as logging on late in the evening or being contacted out of working hours.

The 'always-on' culture is an under researched topic (Kinman and Grant, 2017), but the findings here show it to be of importance to teleworking. Always-on behaviours from the sample were a result of attempting to secure autonomy in the psychological contract exchange through virtual presenteeism. Although being always-on may be seen as undesirable, it was also a set of behaviour expectations followed by certain teleworkers in the belief that it helped retain their autonomy. However, at what point autonomy is still autonomous is up for debate – is a teleworker really experiencing autonomy if they are available around the clock? This question was considered by Mazmanian, Orlikowski and Yates (2013), where they noted the 'autonomy paradox' in professionals who used their mobile email devices continuously through the week. Short term feelings of control and ability to manage were traded against the long-term effects of being unable to disconnect from work. The process of enacting availability/virtual presenteeism behaviours reinforces an always-on culture, creating a feedback loop.

For the teleworker who values autonomy more than anything else in their psychological contract, they are likely to engage in virtual presenteeism to enable this, this in turn supports 'always-on' culture, subsequently reinforcing the expectation of increased availability. The teleworker then encroaches on the tipping point of losing autonomy due to the imbalanced nature of their psychological contract in this context, but they may not be aware of this due to their gratitude for their teleworking opportunity.

Undoubtedly the effects of hyper-connectivity on teleworkers is multi-faceted and ripe for further consideration in the current global climate, readjusting to diffused working locations

in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. From the current research we may infer that hyperconnected teleworking does bring benefits to the ease of communication and team working remotely, for which teleworkers are grateful for in addition to the other benefits they take from working from home. However, without proper training in how to handle the potential information overload and elongation of the working day, teleworkers are at risk of becoming overburdened by the ubiquity of their availability.

Now we have situated the role that modern technology is playing within the teleworking experience the focus of the research will turn toward a new chapter which approaches the possibility of conflicting obligations, the well-being effects felt by the participants and how they cope with day to day teleworking.