THE PACE AND RHYTHM
OF PROFESSIONAL HOMEWORK

Time management is a bandied phrase in business-oriented magazines, women's magazines, professional conferences, and therapeutic counseling. "Managing time" is of concern to people who must balance multiple roles. A Harris (1980) poll finds that the idea of gaining time is one of people's highest desires. Given only 24 hours in the day and one cannot create more time, "managing" time, that is how we "use" and schedule it, is one method of "gaining." As suggested by McGrath and Kelly (1986):

By and large, when people think of time they think of clocks and calendars... We tend to think about time as if it were abstract, unidirectional, uniform in passage, divisible, and homogeneous; but we tend to use time as if it were concrete, phasic and epochal. (p. 36)

Homeworkers may spend more time working at home since work is always "at hand." This is what McClintock (1984) found in his survey of 158 homebased teleworkers. Other people may spend less time, either because of a lack of self-discipline or because they can get more done in less time without the interruptions from work colleagues. The dimensions of time that are critical for study are not only the amount allocated for specific activities, but also the phasic dimensions of its flow, such as pace (i.e. how quickly events unfold), rhythm (i.e. patterns of activities with repeated emphasis and pace), and sequence (i.e. order of events) (Werner, 1987).

Rhythm, pace, and sequencing are ways of managing time and of managing role changes and conflict. Homeworkers may work at night when there are fewer interruptions from family members or when accessibility to mainframe computer services is cheaper and faster (Christensen, 1985). Rarely would they do so if they had to take the car, dig it out of the snow, and drive in a snowstorm to an isolated office building at night.

The phrase "9 to 5" does not describe the working schedules of homeworkers. In interviews with 14 women homeworkers Christensen (1985) found that their work schedules were split between the morning and either afternoon or night hours. From phone interviews with 45 homebased teleworkers, Pratt (1984) found only 40% started work sometime between 7:00 to 9:00 a.m. Half of them worked at night. McClintock (1984) found weekend mornings were the most frequent times for work, weekend evenings the least.
The temporal pace, sequence, and rhythm of professional homework is explored here. The effectiveness and desirability of temporal segregation and sequencing is discussed in a later chapter. In this section the questions addressed are:

What amount of time is engaged in work, domestic and leisure activities?

How often are other activities done concurrently with work activities?

How is work time scheduled throughout the day?

Does the timing and scheduling of professional homework differ between homeworkers of different household compositions? of different genders?

Do people who feel their work and domestic activities temporally overlap differ in work scheduling and timing from those who feel such activities are temporally distinct?

To what extent does work occur when others are at home?

THE SEQUENCING AND RHYTHM OF PROFESSIONAL HOMEWORK

When asked about the regularity of their work schedule, only half the homeworkers felt they kept a regular work schedule through the week (52.5%); 58.6% felt it was regular throughout the month, and 49.5% throughout the year. Basically flexibility of working at home—whether this is imposed or chosen—is reflected for a sizeable portion of professional homeworkers on a weekly, monthly and annual basis.

Respondents completed a time diary of a typical working day or the last working day (see Methodology section), indicating, for half-hour segments, which of 6 predetermined activities occurred, whether or not they were at home, and whether or not others were at home. After completing the log they indicated on a 5-point scale how they felt this typified a working day for them. On this scale, 65.6% of homeworkers felt their time budget reflected a quite typical day (i.e. #1 or #2 on a 5-point scale); 8.6% said it was not typical or there was no such thing as a typical working day for them (i.e. #4 or 5). Subsequent analyses involved information from all respondents regardless of the degree of typicality.

The first thing to consider is the amount of time engaged in activities during the day. Figures 3 and 4 (Appendix F for details) indicates this for the sample as a whole, and for homeworkers of similar household occupancy types. For the sample, approximately 8 hours were
Figure 3
Percentage of Day Engaged in Specific Activities (Entire Sample)

Entire Sample

- working (33.8%)
- sleeping (32.1%)
- leisure/exercise (12.1%)
- housework/childcare (6.3%)
- eating (5.0%)
- other (10.8%)
Figure 4
Percentage of Day Engaged in Specific Activities, for Different Household Occupancy Types

Solos
- other (9.2%)
- eating (3.4%)
- working (36.3%)
- sleeping (31.7%)
- housework/childcare (1.7%)
- leisure/exercise (15.8%)

Adults Only
- other (7.1%)
- eating (6.3%)
- working (34.6%)
- sleeping (32.1%)
- housework/childcare (5.4%)
- leisure/exercise (14.5%)

Single Parents
- other (15.8%)
- eating (1.7%)
- working (25.8%)
- sleeping (31.7%)
- housework/childcare (7.5%)
- leisure/exercise (7.5%)

Full Nest
- other (10.3%)
- eating (3.0%)
- working (32.3%)
- sleeping (33.1%)
- housework/childcare (9.2%)
- leisure/exercise (10.4%)
spent exclusively working, 7.7 for sleeping, 1.5 hours for eating, and almost twice as much time for leisure/exercise as domestic or child care (2.9 compared to 1.5).

Interestingly, multiple activity periods (i.e. 2 activities recorded within the same time frame) occur for these workers, but not frequently. For the sample as a whole, approximately 2.5 hours a day were in these multiple activity periods (see Appendix F). However, these multiple-activity times occur during specific parts of the day: those involving work occur in the early afternoon and somewhat late at night; those not involving work peak around noontime and late afternoon/early evening times (typically meal times). These figures reflect a liberal estimate of overlapping activity periods. Overlapping activities were coded similarly to sequential, non-overlapping activities in a single time period (i.e. within a half-hour) and it is impossible to differentiate the two.

Is professional homework done from "9 to 5"? Hardly. Table 12 (Appendix G) lists the percentage of people working at different times of the day. Compare these figures to the percentages of people doing domestic or child care in the same time periods. Approximately 15% of these homeworkers work some time between midnight and 6 a.m.; approximately 43% work at least sometime between 9 to 12 p.m. Conversations reflect that working late evenings, nights and early morning hours may be because (1) of personal preference for working different times of the day, (2) it is easier or more convenient, to the homeworker or the household, to work at night while the family sleeps and doesn't need their assistance or when children are no longer noisy, (3) they work longer than an 8-hour day, (4) telecommunications are less expensive at this time and/or more accessible (e.g. business phone calls to the East Coast from California are cheaper if made before 6:00 a.m.).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work Activities</th>
<th>Domestic or Childcare</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12:00 am - 5:59 am</td>
<td>14.6% 1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:00 am - 11:59 am</td>
<td>93.7 49.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00 pm - 5:59 pm</td>
<td>97.9 53.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:00 pm - 8:59 pm</td>
<td>57.3 43.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00 pm - 11:59 pm</td>
<td>42.7 12.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Of further importance is the blocking of work activities. This was initially examined by looking at the time consecutively engaged in work activities (including multiple activity periods involving work), called "work blocks." Six hours of work done in one block of time, say from 9 to 3, may be experienced differently than 6 hours done in scattered blocks, such as between 8 to 10, then again at 12 to 1, and again at 3:30 to 5, and finally from 9 to 10:30. The number of work blocks is described in Table 13. The mean is 2.4 for the sample, although over 15% perform their work in 4 or 5 different blocks of time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of Work Blocks</th>
<th>Entire Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>40.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>26.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 13**

Number of "Work Blocks" on Working Day

DIFFERENT PACES FOR DIFFERENT HOUSEHOLDS

As indicated in Figure 4 (and Appendix F), Solos spend considerably less time in domestic/child care than other households, and homeworkers in Solos and Adults Only households spend considerably more time in domestic/child care but also more in leisure or exercise time. These households also spend less time in work, and less in multiple activities involving work.

These groups work at different times of the day also (as seen in Figure 5 and Appendix G). Solos work more than the others late night or early morning hours (i.e. between midnight and 5:30) and early evenings, but they surprisingly drop in numbers between 9:00 - 11:30 p.m., perhaps when they are involved in leisure/exercise pursuits.
Women work considerably less than men in the early and late evening times (Appendix G). This is perhaps a reflection of the lower number of hours they work in comparison to men. But as for time involved in domestic/child care, more than twice as many women than men are involved in this activity during evening and night periods.

We also asked homeworkers to indicate on a 5-point scale the extent they felt their work roles and domestic roles overlapped in time. Figure 6 (and Appendix G) compares the percentage of homeworkers working throughout the day of the extremes (#1 versus #4 or 5) on this scale. Those indicating there was much overlap are those working after midnight and evening hours compared to those who feel their roles are temporally distinct.
WHO IS AROUND WHILE ONE IS WORKING?

On a typical workday, people are at home an average of 20 hours. This ranges from 2.5 to 24, with a skew at the higher end. Fifteen people reported that they were never out of their homes at all, and 27 reported they were out only 1 hour or less.

Respondents are at home with others an average of 13 hours, but of course this varies considerably by household occupancy type.

Table 14 (and Appendix H) lists the proportion of work time when other people are in the home. Although for the entire sample this comprises 45% of the work time, it varies considerably by household occupancy type. Men spend a significantly higher percentage of the work time at home with others around: 66% for men, 38% for women.
Table 14
Proportion of Work Time Spent with Others in Home

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Solos</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults Only</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full Nest</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Parents</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

GRAPHIC SCENARIOS OF WORKING DAYS

Figures 7 and 8 graphically show the sequence of activities on a typical working day for two homeworkers in Full Nest households: one with 2 older children, one with 5 children all under the age of 6 years. They were derived from the time diaries of 2 homeworkers whose time patterns reflect the variety of distributions given in Appendix I (Activities for Each Time Period) and Appendix J (Home Occupancy for Each Time Period).
Figure 7
Scenario of Sequence of Activities on a Typical Working Day, for Mother in Full Nest Household with 2 Older Children
Figure 8
Scenario of Sequence of Activities on a Typical Working Day, for Mother in Full Nest Household with 5 Young Children