

# Mobile Teleworking, Work, and Family: An Intersectional Perspective

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**FLATBUSH  
INTERNET  
ASIFA**

A Community Gathering for Men & Women  
with Practical Solutions to Internet Challenges

**Sunday, June 10 • 9:30 AM**  
Agudas Yisroel Bais Binyomin  
2913 Avenue L



WE WILL BE PRIVILEGED TO HEAR FROM  
**Horav Matisyahu Salomon** שליט"א  
WHO WILL BE COMING TO FLATBUSH SPECIFICALLY FOR THIS EVENT

TIMELY & PRACTICAL  
MESSAGES FROM  
FLATBUSH RABBINIM:

**HORAV MOSHE TUVIA LIEFF  
HORAV AVROHOM SCHORR  
HORAV YISROEL REISMAN**

• ALL SPEECHES WILL BE IN ENGLISH  
• FOR ALL MEN & WOMEN IN THE COMMUNITY  
• ATTENDEES WILL RECEIVE A FREE TECHNOLOGY AWARENESS GUIDE!

11:00 AM - 1:00 PM  
T.A.G. PROFESSIONALS  
WILL BE AVAILABLE  
TO HELP YOU PUT  
INTERNET TO WORK ON  
YOUR SMARTPHONE!

T.C.N. WILL BROADCAST THIS EVENT LIVE TO CITIES NATIONWIDE

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# Work-Family Reconciliation and Gender Inequality

- Reconciling the competing demands of paid work and family responsibilities is one of the major social challenges of our time.
- Seen as the most fundamental obstacle to the full and equal integration of women into the labor market and as a major factor in explaining gender gaps in earning and promotion.
- Coping strategies, including Telework, have been developed at the state, corporate and individual level.
- The “imagined” family seeking WF solutions is a white, middle-class, dual-income, secular family.



# Work-Family and Teleworking

- In the early 21st century: seen as an accessible WF solution. Care-takers (Mothers) can work from home (at least partially) and be more available to their families while maintaining their productivity and availability to their employers. (Solution to long hours corporate culture).
- Mobile Teleworking became a taken-for-granted practice. Working from home after hours – mandatory requirement in most middle-class jobs.
- Still, seen as a benefit rather than as a requirement



## Concerns:

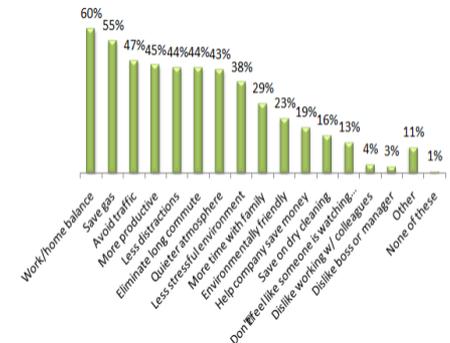
Reproduction of gendered division of labor

Early - lack of face time at work.

Current - Overwork

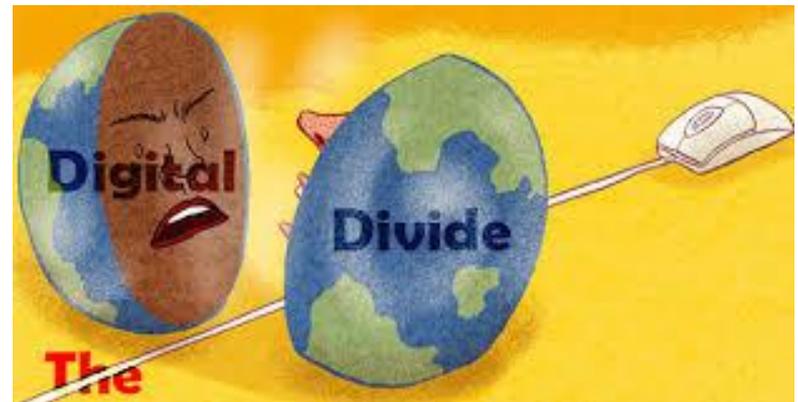
Employees who take advantage of a remote working policy report many benefits including work/life balance, avoiding commutes and saving gas

For which of the following reasons do you take advantage of your company's remote working policy?



# Overlooked Aspects

- The digital divide (not all workers have equal access to the Internet from home or away from work).
- Cultural and normative aspects regarding Internet use and working from home.



# Intersectionality Perspective

- Intersectionality: looking into the mutual reproduction of class, gender and racial relations of inequality. (Acker 2006)
- In recent years religiosity was added. Mostly around Islam.
- IN WF studies - Need to look at the different “needs” of families of different structures and from various cultural, class, ethnic, and religious backgrounds, in terms of reconciliation work and family.
- Need to take into consideration **power relations** at home, at work, and at the general societal level when tracing workers’ ability to negotiate unique WF organizational arrangements.



# Intersectionality and the Internet: Main Questions

How do the digital divide and cultural differences affect Internet usage for WF reconciliation purposes?

- Work-related consequences
- Self and group identity consequences
- Family-related consequences



# My Case:

## The Ultraorthodox Hi-Tech Workers in Israel

- Ultra-Orthodox Jews: Self-segregating social minority, about 9% of Israeli population.
- Maintain a **segregated** lifestyle to prevent assimilation.
- Clearly demarcated communities with strong social control and adherence to rabbinical authority. Diversion from the community's norms may lead to exclusion from community's social networks and services (including children's education) and hinders one's status in the marriage market.
- Religious devotion takes the form of:
  - Men devoted to studying (The learners' society).
  - Women who support men's studies by being the breadwinners
  - Large families (avg. 6.7 children per household)
  - Close supervision of women's sexuality and modesty



# UO Women in the High Tech Sector

- Until the late 1990s state sponsorship mostly via the welfare state and children allowances.
- Women work within the community, as teachers and secretaries.
- With Neo liberalization and the withdraw of the state, Rabbis (reluctantly) accept the idea of professional (secular) education for women and their entrance into the mixed labor market.
- Still, women who work outside the community are required to constantly demonstrate their religious devotion
- Especially true in the high-tech sector, partially due to its link to the Internet.

# Religious restrictions on using Internet and smart phones



- The People of Israel, have mercy! Pray for my father! Let him throw away his iPhone and Internet so he will not break our family apart!



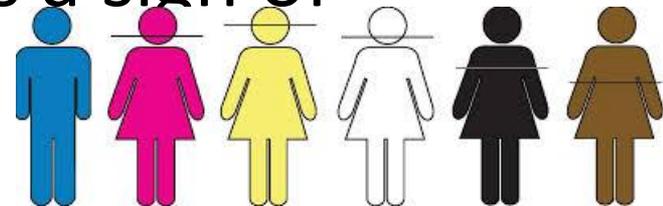
- Strictly forbidden to have a computer - **Internet brings cancer**

# What do we have?

- Israeli High-Tech industry: mostly secular; export oriented; Americanized (long hours corporate culture); Mobile telework as a norm.
- UO women: Large families; double burden to prove religious and work devotions.
- Internet use, at work and at home, as a litmus paper.
  - What are the WF consequences?

# Work-Related Consequences

- Prohibition on telecommuting + special requirements regarding Internet usage at work = Limited job market and compromised jobs and salaries.
- Employers' recognition of religious restrictions reduces pressure to work from home and allows for uninterrupted family time.
- Agreement to work from home against rabbinical instructions is seen as a sign of exceptional devotion.



# Identity work

- Limited Internet usage in the workplace becomes an identity marker.
- Workers request installation of filters to allow them to use the Internet with no damage to their religious image. By doing so, they also reinforce the need for them to work in close proximity to each other. This proximity allows for peers' supervision and demarcation vis-à-vis other workers.
- Prefer to have their computer screens exposed to others, to publically exhibit their devotion and adherence to the community rules.
- Still, computer and Internet literacy acquired through their jobs allows for information gathering that is not available to other women in this community.



# Family consequences

- Because the choice not to work from home hinders Haredi women's careers in the hi-tech sector, in many cases they are able to obtain their husbands' support for installing a computer with Internet access, thus increasing computer and Internet literacy among their children.
- The combination of financial independence afforded by the high income associated with regular high-tech jobs and the temptation to allow telecommuting for career and family reasons sometimes leads to the strengthening of the nuclear family unit and an erosion of adherence to Rabbinical Authority in the private sphere.

# Take Away

- When considering the consequences of Telecommuting in gender terms, one needs to take gender intersectionality into consideration. Minority groups' attitude toward the internet and towards the work-home separation affect workers ability to use telecommuting to their benefit.
- The equal integration of minority groups into the labor force depends upon a better understanding of the cultural and class related dynamics surrounding Internet usage.

Thank You For  
Your Patience

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