

2023-08

# Teleworking Couples Cultivating Work-Life Wellness: An Action-Project Method Study

Como, Rebecca

---

Como, R. (2023). Teleworking couples cultivating work-life wellness: an action-project method study (Master's thesis, University of Calgary, Calgary, Canada). Retrieved from <https://prism.ucalgary.ca>.  
<https://hdl.handle.net/1880/116874>

*Downloaded from PRISM Repository, University of Calgary*

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Teleworking Couples Cultivating Work-Life Wellness: An Action-Project Method Study

by

Rebecca Como

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE  
DEGREE OF MASTER OF SCIENCE

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

CALGARY, ALBERTA

AUGUST, 2023

© Rebecca Como 2023

### **Abstract**

In response to the growing number of workers in Canada who are hoping to work partially from home after the pandemic, this study explored teleworking couples' pursuit of work-life wellness by addressing the question, "How do teleworking couples construct and cultivate work-life wellness together?" Participants were Canadian teleworkers and their domestic partners of longer than one year (5 dyads, 10 participants). Data were collected and analyzed using the action-project method, an exploratory qualitative research method associated with Contextual Action Theory. The study revealed that couples focused on a variety of individualized projects and managing and adapting telework to meet their individual and relationship needs. During the interview, participants (1) used humour to lighten serious conversational topics, (2) exhibited non-verbal signs of connection, (3) openly expressed perspectives, experiences, and needs, and (4) collaborated and worked as a team. Outside of the interview, participants reported (1) actions that reflected respect for boundaries, (2) telework impacting how they interact, (3) engaging in physical activity and exercise, and (4) having ongoing open conversations to resolve telework issues. Six additional themes were also noted: (1) the role of pets, (2) flexibility, (3) benefits of the traditional office, (4) impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, (5) physical space, and (6) overcoming past obstacles. The findings led to numerous important implications and applications for employers, practitioners, and policy-makers, which are discussed along with strengths and limitations of the study and directions for future research.

*Keywords:* work-life wellness, telework, couple, romantic relationship

## **Preface**

This thesis is the original work by the author, Rebecca E. Como. The research project received ethics approval from the University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethic Board [REB22-0864]. Participant interviews were completed by the author and data analysis was completed by the author, a research assistant (L. Warner, doctoral student, Counselling Psychology, University of Calgary), and the research supervisor (J.F. Domene, Professor, University of Calgary).

### **Acknowledgements**

Thank you to my research team, José Domene (research supervisor) and Lindsay Warner (research assistant), whose support was instrumental to every part of my research process. I would also like to thank Tanya Mudry and Tiffany Beks who provided me with early support on my research proposal and Dominique Bonneville who encouraged me with thesis writing. A big thank you to the research participants who contributed their stories to this project. Lastly, I express appreciation for my loving partner, James Cree, for his moral support and unwavering kindness.

## Table of Contents

Abstract .....	ii
Preface.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
Table of Contents .....	v
List of Tables .....	ix
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Teleworking Couples .....	1
Defining Work-life Wellness .....	3
Researcher Reflexivity and Positionality .....	3
Structure of Thesis .....	5
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	6
Work-Life Wellness and Teleworking.....	6
Work-life Wellness while Teleworking in the COVID-19 Pandemic .....	7
Work-Life Wellness and Teleworking Couples.....	10
Work-Life Wellness and Parenting.....	12
Contextual Action Theory.....	15
Present Study.....	17
Chapter 3: Methodology .....	19
Research Design: Action-Project Method.....	19

Participation Criteria and Recruitment Procedures .....	20
Data Collection and Analysis Procedures .....	22
Main Interview .....	22
Within-Case Analysis .....	24
Member Checking Interview .....	25
Cross-case Analysis .....	26
Research Team .....	26
Methodological Integrity .....	29
Chapter 4: Findings .....	31
Participant Demographics .....	31
Within-case Findings .....	32
Couple 1: Clementine and Vernon .....	33
Couple 2: Lindsay and Harrison .....	37
Couple 3: Colleen and William .....	41
Couple 4: Monica and Thomas .....	45
Couple 5: Ayla and Barry .....	48
Cross-Case Findings .....	52
Joint Projects .....	53
Actions .....	55
Additional Themes .....	60

Summary of Findings .....	66
Chapter 5: Discussion .....	67
Connections to Existing Research.....	67
Joint Projects.....	67
Actions.....	69
Additional Themes .....	74
Strengths and Limitations.....	77
Strengths .....	77
Limitations.....	78
Future Directions for Research .....	81
Implications and Applications.....	82
Suggestions for Employers.....	83
Advice for Practitioners and Policy Makers.....	84
Strategies for Teleworking Couples .....	85
Conclusion.....	86
References.....	87
Appendix A: Recruitment Email .....	100
Appendix B: List of Organizations and Groups .....	101
Appendix D: Informed Consent Form .....	103
Appendix E: Interview Protocol .....	106



Appendix F: Demographic Questionnaire ..... 113

Appendix G: Code List ..... 115

Appendix H: Resource List..... 124

Appendix I: Narrative Summaries ..... 126

**List of Tables**

Table 1 Participant Demographics .....	32
Table 2 Projects Related to Managing and Adapting Telework to meet their Individual and Relationship Needs .....	55

## Chapter 1: Introduction

*Despite being around each other so much and working together, you could see that we would butt heads more. But... I think we've done a really good job of managing.*

– Clementine (couple 1), participant

Couples who work from home (i.e., teleworking couples) face many challenges to their work-life wellness such as overworking and distractions (Nemțeanu & Dabija, 2023; Vittersø et al., 2003). However, teleworking can also boost work-life wellness with the right factors in play (Chung & Van der Lippe, 2020; Vanderstukken et al., 2021). What makes work-life wellness different for a couple rather than an individual teleworker? Couples need to navigate complex work, personal life, and relational factors together, in order to foster their work-life wellness. In this study, I interviewed 5 teleworking couples about their work-life wellness using Action-Project Method (A-PM). My overarching research question was: How do teleworking couples construct and cultivate work-life wellness together? In this introduction chapter, I will provide context around the importance of this study by describing how telework relates to couples. I will then define work-life wellness and provide my positionality in relation to the research.

### Teleworking Couples

In the past half-century, telework (i.e., working from home) has grown as an accepted practice by employers worldwide as technology advances and costs rise (Champagne et al., 2023; Como & Domene, 2023; Oakman et al., 2022). In April 2020, teleworking in Canada increased from around 5% to 40% due to mandated working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic (Conference Board of Canada, 2021; Mehdi & Morissette, 2021; Statistics Canada, 2021a; Statistics Canada, 2021b). Employees and employers in Canada appreciate the value of telework, even though it may not have been their original choice of a work arrangement prior to

the COVID-19 pandemic, with 80% to 90% of teleworkers hoping to continue working from home (Statistics Canada, 2021a; Statistics Canada, 2021b). Similarly, rights and obligations related to telework work have become an important bargaining point in some negotiations between unions and employers, such as the contract negotiation that took place between the Canadian federal government and the Public Sector Alliance of Canada in spring 2023 (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2023).

Researchers from around the world have contributed to a growing body of literature on the relationship dynamics of teleworking couples (Amstad et al., 2011; Çoban, 2021; Ojala et al., 2014; Vittersø et al., 2003). An individual's quality of life may decrease with more teleworking from their partner, which may be related to overworking, lack of boundaries, or jealousy due to work flexibility (Vittersø et al., 2003). Time spent at work can moderate how work impacts family outcomes such as marital and family satisfaction (Amstad et al., 2011). Individuals may also become emotionally and physically disturbed by their partner's teleworking as it can infringe on the private sphere (Ojala et al., 2014). Spouses who identify as women can be particularly critical of their partners teleworking too much, especially when there are high job demands (Ojala et al., 2014). In contrast, from the perspective of the teleworker, interruptions and conflict with family members can decrease teleworker well-being and work performance (Nemțeanu & Dabija, 2023). Additionally, high workload for the male identifying spouses may result in women taking primary responsibility for traditional roles at home even if they are also teleworking (Çoban, 2021). Supervisors may be ill-equipped to respond to workers' domestic concerns and conflicts impacting the realm of work and productivity (Nemțeanu & Dabija, 2023). Overall, teleworking appears to put pressure on couples by making the tension between work and home more visible and pushing spouses into traditional gender roles.

Even though teleworking can strain the couple dynamic, there may also be hope for teleworking couples to construct and cultivate work-life wellness together. Work-life wellness (WLW) encapsulates two main ideas: (1) feeling well in a variety of domains, and (2) feeling well about the intersection of domains (Como et al., 2021). Despite evidence suggesting that partners influence each other's work-life wellness (Amstad et al., 2011; Çoban, 2021; Ojala et al., 2014; Vittersø et al., 2003), there is a lack of research on how they act together to achieve wellness in the context of teleworking.

### **Defining Work-life Wellness**

Researchers use terms such as work-life balance, work-life integration, quality of work life, and work-family conflict to describe the interplay between work and life (Brower, 2011; Brower, 2014; Como et al., 2021; Duxbury & Higgins, 2012; Tarigan et al., 2020). In this thesis, I am using the term “work-life wellness” instead of “work-family conflict,” which is used in some of the existing literature. Work-life wellness is inclusive, with no reference to family status (Como et al., 2021). For example, some teleworking couples without children may identify as a family; however, some may not. Not using the term work-family conflict also allows flexibility to study the work-life wellness of several experiences of home and work life rather than focusing solely on conflict. Furthermore, unlike the concept of work-life balance, work-life wellness does not imply that work and non-work spheres should be in balance or equal. Additionally, work-life wellness is a flexible term that allows for a variety of approaches to wellness (e.g., segmentation, integration, balance; Como et al., 2021).

### **Researcher Reflexivity and Positionality**

I have 5 years of experience as a teleworker. As a teleworker myself, I occasionally struggle with work-life wellness. Being in a common-law relationship, I can see how my

teleworking influences work-life wellness in my relationship through creating strain and limiting opportunities for personal space. As a teleworker in a common law relationship and as someone who has conducted previous research on telework and wellness (Como et al., 2021), I began my thesis research with some pre-existing ideas about how couples should experience work-life wellness. Some of my pre-conceived notions were that work-life wellness increases with high levels of communication and physical intimacy. On the other hand, my familiarity with teleworking in a couple increased my empathy toward participants and general knowledge of the topic. I casually telework in a provincial mental health setting with a large governmental health organization. The nature of my work influenced the lens of my research, with more emphasis on public implications for mental health and increasing social determinants of health. Along a similar line, I am a student in a Master of Science in Counselling Psychology program, which oriented me towards the feelings and behaviours of participants.

Furthermore, I identify as a cis-woman, a position that has led me to prioritizing the thoughts of participants who also identify as cis-women. For example, when I reviewed the transcript of a man-woman couple, I would find myself occasionally placing greater value on the ideas of the woman participant. Additionally, growing up on a farm influenced my preference towards participants with a strong work ethic, and I had trouble identifying themes related to financial strain due to my upper-class upbringing. As a white person with English and French heritage, I operated from a Western point of view and had difficulty understanding other cultural ideas. At the same time, the research method that I used relied on a consensus-based analysis strategy, where any individual researcher's positionality and perspectives are balanced by the positionality and perspectives of the other members of the team, which in this case included

another cis-woman and a cis-man with backgrounds and experiences of telework that were different to my own.

### **Structure of Thesis**

In the next chapter, I will provide an overview of the literature on work-life wellness for teleworking couples. Chapters 3 and 4 will cover the methodology and findings, respectively. I will conclude the thesis with a comprehensive discussion of strengths, limitations, and future directions in Chapter 5.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### Work-Life Wellness and Teleworking

Recent research reveals that telework may have both positive and negative influences on work-life wellness (Andrade & Petiz Lousã, 2021; Chung & Van der Lippe, 2020). For example, a quantitative study on around 200 workers mandated to telework during the COVID-19 pandemic in Portugal revealed that a lack of boundaries (including after-hours technology use), high work demands, and overworking may decrease teleworkers' work-life wellness (Andrade & Petiz Lousã, 2021). A literature review on gender and flexible work (i.e., control over where and when one works) identified a nuanced relationship between teleworking and work-life wellness (Chung & Van der Lippe, 2020). Specifically, Chung and colleagues stated that multi-tasking and overworking can decrease work-life wellness. Their review also concluded that gender and parental status impact the experience of work-life wellness when working from home due to social constraints and norms.

On the other hand, existing research has also identified numerous potential benefits to teleworking, which have the potential to increase work-life wellness (Schur et al., 2020; Vanderstukken et al., 2021). Although some people are required to telework because it is mandated by their employer, many people choose to telework to increase work-life wellness (Vanderstukken et al., 2021). In their survey of a sample of approximately 1200 Belgian teleworkers, Vanderstukken and colleagues found three main motivations for teleworking: fulfilling job requirements, being more efficient and productive, and improving work-life balance. These authors concluded that, in terms of work-life wellness, teleworking can eliminate commuting and potentially increase personal time if boundaries are maintained (Vanderstukken et al., 2021).



Additionally, teleworking may offer access to work for people with disabilities or child-care responsibilities (Schur et al., 2020). Schur and colleagues cross-tabulated data from various census and disability surveys in the United States of America and found that workers with disabilities are more likely to telework, regardless of gender and education level. Furthermore, working from home can be beneficial for people who are able to integrate the work and family domains, such as doing laundry during the workday (Chung & Van der Lippe, 2020). Smarter working expert, Vanhoutte, stated that telework can also increase access to nature by allowing employees to live in more remote areas or having the flexibility and time to go out into nature (Hambley, 2020).

### **Work-life Wellness while Teleworking in the COVID-19 Pandemic**

The COVID-19 pandemic acted as an impetus in popularizing telework, as working from home during the pandemic was “enforced” by many organizations for those with jobs that could be performed remotely (Marowits, 2022). In a news article, Marowits outlines the issues stemming from the divide between occupations that are suitable or not suitable for teleworking. Marowits also noted that approximately 60% of the Canadian workforce is unable to work from home due to the nature of their work and concluded that this dichotomy between those who are able to work from home and those who are not may increase resentment and social injustice (Marowits, 2022). During the COVID-19 pandemic, teleworking was also coupled with greater work responsibilities and increased uncertainty for most workers (Jamal et al., 2023). Jamal and colleagues conducted a longitudinal quantitative study on approximately 400 teleworkers in India and found that, regardless of type of occupation, many teleworkers experienced burnout due to increased job demands. In this study, teleworkers experiencing burnout and low resiliency were also more likely to quit their job.

Past research on telework and work-life wellness laid a foundation for studies on teleworking in the COVID-19 pandemic context. Furthermore, pre-existing supports, such as assessments, coaching, and workplace design have been available to promote work-life wellness for teleworkers. Yao and colleagues (2021) surveyed around 200 employees and their spouses in China and found that leaders who value the personal lives of employees provide instrumental and emotional support to boost employee work-life wellness.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, women completed about three times more housework and childcare duties than men (Obioma et al., 2022). Similarly, Obioma and colleagues surveyed around 820 couples in Germany, India, South Africa, and Nigeria during the COVID-19 pandemic and found that women spent more time on female-typed housework, which is often emotionally and mentally demanding. However, according to their survey, men with higher gender equality from Germany were more likely to complete female-typed labour.

Similarly, Nguyen and Armoogum (2021) surveyed 355 participants living in Vietnam during April 2020, a time when local schools were closed. They reported that, due to propensity of traditional views of gender roles in Vietnam, women tend to experience greater household burden and role conflict than men. Interestingly, around 63% of women in the Nguyen and Armoogum study wanted to continue teleworking after the COVID-19 pandemic as compared to 39% of men.

Fewer available supports for women during the COVID-19 pandemic strengthened the need to understand gender in relation to work-life wellness (Chung & Van der Lippe, 2020). Çoban (2021) interviewed 18 married women with children in Turkey during a period of high COVID-19 restrictions. Due to the closure of schools and daycares, many of the participants had to work while caring for their children. Additionally, some of these women's career trajectories

were stalled due to business closures and lack of a private place in the home to work. Moreover, Çoban concluded that the COVID-19 pandemic may have strengthened women's tendency to engage in housework, depending on spousal differences in cleaning and hygiene related to pandemic safety. Many of the participants described feeling the need to take on additional cleaning duties to keep the family safe, including reminding children and their husbands to follow hygienic routines. Furthermore, some of these women found that the extra time they had due to the high level of restrictions imposed by the Turkish government at that time was filled with child-care rather than meeting their individual needs or career goals.

In the Canadian context, Haider and Anwar (2023) reviewed data from surveys conducted by Statistics Canada in 2020 on 12,600 organizations and around 4200 adults. They reported that, prior the COVID-19 pandemic, women were 15% less likely to telework than men and that gender did not appear to influence the adoption of teleworking during the pandemic. In another study, the Environics Institute for Survey Research (2021) surveyed around 5300 Canadian adults a few months into the COVID-19 pandemic. Approximately 64% of respondents found teleworking less stressful than working at the traditional office. However, 33% of respondents agreed that they did not have the proper equipment or software for teleworking. Furthermore, in their study, 25% of men with no children at home reported it was impossible to do their job well from home, which may be because men are less accustomed to managing both work and home responsibilities.

Fortunately, COVID-19 pandemic restrictions have lifted in Canada, resulting in more individual and organizational freedom around work arrangements (Champagne et al., 2023; Oakman et al., 2022). Champagne and colleagues reviewed public sector policies on hybrid work and teleworking over the past 20 years and found that policies shifted abruptly around the

COVID-19 pandemic. They reported that, for around 1.5 years, individual government departments were able to make decisions about which work arrangements would be available to employees. However, the government changed the policies later into the pandemic to mandate a workplace presence quota, which resulted in employees and unions requesting a more flexible hybrid work model. Champagne and colleagues also argued that teleworking and hybrid work arrangements can support work-life wellness, health, and job satisfaction. In light of the ways that the COVID-19 pandemic has permanently altered perceptions and expectations around telework in Canada (Champagne et al., 2023; Marowits, 2022), it is evident that additional research is needed to understand all aspects of work-life wellness while teleworking in a post COVID-19 world.

### **Work-Life Wellness and Teleworking Couples**

Using boundary theory, Delanoeije and colleagues (2019) proposed that, due to the nature of teleworking, individuals may need to implement more permeable boundaries to switch between work and home domains more easily. In their study, Delanoeije and colleagues analyzed the diaries of 81 Flemish workers with partners and children (53 teleworkers and 28 non-teleworkers) and found that teleworkers who made more role transitions during the workday reported less work-home conflict than those who made fewer role transitions. Furthermore, Chauhan (2022) interviewed 30 teleworking couples in India, and found that physical, cognitive, and emotional boundaries are important aspects of teleworking. Women and men in their study particularly struggled with household distractions and lack of privacy. Therefore, it may be important to attend to teleworking couples' boundaries to understand their work-life wellness.

In addition, telework can both create and exacerbate existing gender-based imbalances in domestic responsibilities, career trajectories, and expectations. For example, in 2018, female

identifying employees in Canada earned an average of 13.3% less per hour than male employees (Pelletier et al., 2019). This income gap may lead women to prioritize chores while supporting the man's ability to work uninterrupted, which may, in turn, further the pay gap (Fortin et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2020). Women who work from home may experience similar work-life wellness as those who work from the traditional office (Chung & Van der Lippe, 2020). However, while engaging in telework, married women with children may encounter pressure to forego career ambitions for household duties (Çoban, 2021). Furthermore, social norms may perpetuate women's prioritization of the home sphere, including caregiving and housework (Chung & Van der Lippe, 2020; Mergener et al., 2023).

Mergener and colleagues conducted a quantitative study on around 16,000 employees who took part in a 2018 German employment survey. The researchers found that teleworking women experienced a slightly higher alignment between work and personal life than women working from a traditional office. In contrast, teleworking men who participated in their survey experienced much higher alignment between work and personal life than men working from a traditional office. Furthermore, Mergener and colleagues found that women who telework spend more time on domestic work than women who work from the traditional office.

Couples may accept traditional gender roles as the norm and, therefore, may not think about or discuss splitting the responsibilities any other way (Sullivan & Lewis, 2001). Furthermore, some men may take less responsibility for household chores, citing a lack of knowledge and competency (Çoban, 2021). However, other men may do more household labor when they are working from home compared to when they worked from the office (Sullivan & Lewis, 2001).

Sullivan and Lewis (2001) conducted a thematic analysis of 28 interviews with teleworkers and their spouses or children from England. The researchers found that men were more likely to experience work interfering with personal life than vice versa as compared to women. However, women who were invested in their careers or did not have children reported a similar experience of work interfering with personal life rather than personal life impacting work.

Men may also be more likely to have a dedicated private space in the home to work, whereas women may have to work in common spaces with more distractions (Çoban, 2021). Holloway focused on a single case-study of an Australian family with both partners teleworking and found that the case family worked together to adapt and renovate their home environment to accommodate boundary-setting preferences for each member of the couple (Holloway, 2007). However, financial constraints and renting may prevent some couples from renovating their spaces to accommodate teleworking boundaries. Couples composed of people who work from home are then left to decide who gets the most private space for work. In addition to factors related to the couple relationship, cultivation of work-life wellness may be further complicated by children in the home.

### **Work-Life Wellness and Parenting**

Although some parents may avoid telework to keep home and work spheres separate (Zhang et al., 2020), some parents, primarily women, may decide to telework to decrease childcare costs and to better balance paid work and domestic labour (Mergener et al., 2023; Sullivan & Lewis, 2001). Furthermore, some women may feel internally obligated to prioritize parenting tasks, while men may believe that parenting tasks are voluntary (Sullivan & Lewis, 2001). Same sex couples may divide parenting tasks more evenly than heterosexual couples;

however, inequality may persist depending on the unique circumstances of each couple (Goldberg et al., 2021). The presence of children at home may decrease work-life wellness and strengthen gender differences for teleworkers (Zhang et al., 2020). Zhang and colleagues analyzed data from a German labour survey conducted in 2010 with a sample of approximately 188,000 participants to understand the relationship between life stages and telework. These researchers found that the presence of children in the home had the greatest influence on whether or not an individual teleworked.

Teleworkers with children under five may feel as if they never have time for their family; at the same time, however, they may find working from home easier than working from the traditional office (Environics Institute for Survey Research, 2021). Additionally, teleworkers with children may believe they cannot be a good parent and a good employee at the same time (Environics Institute for Survey Research, 2021). Conflict between the work and family spheres may be higher for those with younger children due to greater demands for supervision, organization, and assistance with schooling (Goldberg et al., 2021; Mergener et al., 2023).

Goldberg and colleagues surveyed 89 adoptive parents from the United States of America during June 2020 about their relationship, mental health, and work. In terms of couples that shared household tasks evenly, the researchers found an even distribution across lesbian, gay, and heterosexual couples. Several couples experienced strain and conflict related to domestic labour due to one partner working at home and one partner working outside of the home. To minimize workload, some parents decreased expectations around schoolwork and involved the children more in household tasks.

In a study conducted prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Ojala and colleagues analyzed data from around 8,500 Finnish teleworkers. The researchers found that teleworkers with

children do more overtime than teleworkers without children, which may be due to work schedules centering around child-care and school hours. Furthermore, the researchers concluded increased work hours may result in disputes between couples that may be exacerbated by job demands and the perception of child-care being the responsibility of the wife (Ojala et al., 2014).

Women's employment may be seen as a threat to their families (Gherardi, 2015).

Gherardi interviewed 70 entrepreneurial craftswomen in Northern Italy to understand how they attained work-family balance. Most of the women were married with one older child. As entrepreneurs, the women in the study dealt with expectations from their spouses that were at odds with their passion for their businesses. For example, one woman stated that her husband expected her to telework when their son was young and was disappointed when she worked outside of the home.

Overall, existing research reveals that the connections between teleworking and work-life wellness is nuanced, especially when relationship demands are also included. Teleworkers' work-life wellness seems to be influenced by numerous variables, including boundary setting, workload, organizational support, gender, and the presence of children (Çoban, 2021; Gherardi, 2015; Ojala et al., 2014; Sullivan & Lewis, 2001; Zhang et al., 2020). In contrast, there is relatively little knowledge about what individuals within romantic relationships do together to promote their work-life wellness when one or both members of the couple are teleworking. My study investigated the actions that couples may take to cultivate their work-life wellness together, as well as the work-life wellness projects that couples pursue. I conducted this research using the action-project method, a qualitative research method grounded in contextual action theory.



## **Contextual Action Theory**

I used Young and colleagues' (2021) Contextual Action Theory (CAT) to guide my study. CAT is well suited for answering the research question because it foregrounds the role of context (i.e., telework) and social relationships (i.e., couples) as central to understanding how people pursue life goals (i.e., career development; work-life wellness). CAT involves viewing the world through the lens of goal-directed action that occurs within social, historical, and cultural contexts (Domene & Young, 2008; Jensen et al., 2022; Young et al., 2005). The world is seen as independent of the observer, although multiple interpretations are possible (Domene & Young, 2008). Within CAT, autonomy and intention of action are central, as people intend to change themselves and the environment (Young et al., 2021). Furthermore, the theory assumes that, in daily life, action typically occurs in a social context, and thus focuses primarily on joint actions that occur between people (Young et al., 2005, 2021)

Action is a complex phenomenon that must be viewed from multiple perspectives to be fully understood, including the perspectives of manifest behaviour, internal processes, and social meaning (Valach et al., 2002). For example, a member of a teleworking couple may close the office door whenever they are in a meeting (manifest behaviour) to signal to other members of the household that they are in a meeting (social meaning), and because they desire privacy and feel frustrated by previous interruptions (internal process). Furthermore, CAT organizes action into a three-tiered hierarchy consisting of: elements, functional steps, and goals. Elements are the foundation of actions and involve small, observable gestures and phrases. In the teleworking context, an element could be a spouse closing the door to their private home office. When several elements are undertaken to achieve a common purpose, this forms a functional step, which are intentional movements towards goals. An example of a functional step would be the other spouse

noticing the closed door and intentionally being quiet and not entering the room to prevent disruption. At the apex of the hierarchy of action lies goals, which reflect the intentions of actors engaged in a series of elements and functional steps. To continue the example of a spouse closing the door to their office, their underlying goal may be to ensure the teleworking spouse has a disruption-free performance review with their boss. In a different context, for example when the spouse is not working, the same elements and functional steps could serve a different goal, such as wanting time alone to “cool off” after a heated argument.

CAT also proposes a temporal sequence of action, where action systems increase in complexity over time, beginning with actions themselves, then building into projects and careers. As Valach and colleagues (2002) and Young and colleagues (2015) explain, actions tend to occur over relatively short timeframes, such as minutes or hours. The authors explain that, when individual and joint actions oriented toward a goal occur over a medium length of time (e.g., days, weeks, or months), this can be conceptualized as a project. Finally, they explain that careers occur over a lifetime and are made of projects, carry significant meaning, and are temporally unbounded. Importantly, within CAT, careers do not necessarily have an occupational focus. Therefore, it is possible for a couple to have a "relationship career," where the members of the couple work on maintaining and enhancing their mutual relationship as romantic partners over their lifetimes, despite complicating life experiences, such as having children, experiencing health problems, or adjusting to working from home full-time. The relational focus of CAT, where the emphasis is on understanding the joint actions that occur between people, make this theoretical framework particularly well suited for research examining processes that occur within couples, such as how they act together to pursue work-life wellness.

## Present Study

Given the increase in teleworking in the general population in Canada (Champagne et al., 2023; Environics Institute for Survey Research et al., 2022), more couples are teleworking than ever before. The preceding literature review revealed that telework may have a nuanced relationship with work-life wellness (Andrade & Petiz Lousã, 2021; Chung & Van der Lippe, 2020). The overworking, lack of boundaries, and multi-tasking often associated with teleworking can decrease work-life wellness. However, work-life wellness during telework can be increased by additional personal time, not needing to commute, improved access to work for those with disabilities or children, and the ability integrate work and home life (Chung & Van der Lippe, 2020; Schur et al., 2020; Vanderstukken et al., 2021).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many Canadians were forced to telework along with experiencing greater work responsibilities and uncertainty (Jamal et al., 2023; Marowits, 2022). Thankfully, leadership support, coaching, assessments, and workplace design facilitated work-life wellness for new teleworkers (Yao et al., 2021). COVID-19 pandemic restrictions have lifted in Canada, resulting in more individual and organizational freedom around work arrangements (Champagne et al., 2023; Oakman et al., 2022).

Within couples, telework can both create and exacerbate existing gender-based imbalances in domestic responsibilities, career trajectories, and expectations (Mergener et al., 2023). Couples may or may not engage in conversations about allocation of workspace and domestic labour in the home (Çoban, 2021; Holloway, 2007; Sullivan & Lewis, 2001). The presence of children in the home may further complicate work-life wellness for teleworking couples. Zhang and colleagues (2020) found that children were the strongest predictor of teleworking. Teleworking parents may have mixed feelings about teleworking. On one hand,

teleworking may be easier than working at a traditional office (Environics Institute for Survey Research, 2021). On the other hand, teleworking may increase work-family conflict for parents due to overworking and high expectations for children and spouses (Gherardi, 2015; Goldberg et al., 2021; Mergener et al., 2023; Ojala et al., 2014).

One of the dominant characteristics of the existing research is that a majority of it has focused on individuals within couples and families, rather than the couple as a unit. This focus on the individual contradicts one of the central tenets of CAT, which is that people act together to form and pursue their goals (Domene & Young, 2008). Therefore, CAT proposes that, without studies focused on the couple together, it is not possible to obtain a full understanding of what factors couples prioritize when jointly addressing their work-life wellness.

Responding to this situation in the literature, I conducted an exploration of the phenomenon using the A-PM, a qualitative research method grounded in CAT. Specifically, my research question was: "How do teleworking couples construct and cultivate work-life wellness together?" My sub-questions were: (1) "What are the work-life wellness projects of teleworking couples?" and (2) "What actions do these couples take together to pursue their work-life wellness?" I also intended that this thesis will contribute to a better understanding of work-life wellness in teleworking couples, and inform policies, counselling techniques, and future research. At the end of the day, my desire in conducting this study is to assist teleworking couples to cultivate work-life wellness to strengthen their overall health and well-being. I answered my research questions using the procedures described in the Methods chapter.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

### Research Design: Action-Project Method

I collected and analyzed data according to the established procedures of A-PM, which is a qualitative method centered on action, relationship, and context (Young et al., 2005, 2021). A-PM is informed by CAT, which has an ontology that is closely related to social constructionism (Young et al., 2005; Young & Valach, 2004). Social constructionism is the idea that our knowledge of the world is constructed through our relationships with other people, including social discourses, familial relations, and other contexts (Gergen, 2011; Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Young & Valach, 2004). CAT builds on these ideas by emphasizing that relational actions and projects construct the world (Young & Valach, 2004). A-PM operates under action-referenced relativism, which is the idea that people construct their social realities based on the actions of themselves and others (Young & Valach, 2004). The method includes procedures to explore participants' internal process of constructing reality as well as their meaning-making with others, including the researcher. In terms of epistemology, A-PM posits that findings are socially constructed, while also being grounded in external actions. A-PM uses a methodology which allows researchers to investigate phenomena from multiple perspectives, including social meaning, action, and internal process (Valach et al., 2002). As far as axiology is concerned, A-PM researchers have found that the methodology sometimes leads to change and growth in participants (Young et al., 2021). Nonetheless, Young and colleagues also indicate that the aim of inquiry is descriptive and reconstructive; promotion of change is not an explicit purpose of A-PM research, even though some participants do change during their research involvement.

Consistent with the tenets of CAT, A-PM specifically focuses on the actions, projects, and careers of people as they work towards goals (Domene & Young, 2008). Pairs of

interconnected people (e.g., romantic couples; a counsellor-client couple) take part in joint actions, which are short-term, intentional, and occur within a social context. As explained in Chapter 2, it makes sense within CAT and A-PM to conceptualize a romantic partnership over a lifetime as a career; one that may include a wide range of projects such as planning to have a child, surviving a health crisis, or transitioning to retirement together.

A-PM is a suitable method to use for this study because teleworking in couples is an inherently relational phenomenon that includes such things as the negotiation of work hours, household duties, and child-care responsibilities (Zhang et al., 2020). Furthermore, work-life wellness is relational, reflexive, and jointly constructed through action (Fedakova & Istonova, 2017; Grant et al., 2013; Hillbrecht & Lero, 2014). For example, a couple may share their work schedules with one another to discuss the allocation of personal and relational time with the aim of spending more time together. Moreover, context influences telework and work-life wellness (Martinez-Amador, 2016). For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, many people worked from home to decrease virus spread even though they may have had a preference for working from the traditional office under normal conditions. In terms of work-life wellness, national contexts such as government regulations on work hours per week and work culture may influence work-life wellness (Como & Domene, 2022).

### **Participation Criteria and Recruitment Procedures**

Participants were teleworkers and their domestic partners of longer than one year residing in Canada. Consistent with previous A-PM research, the sample consisted of five couples (10 participants; Klaassen et al., 2015; Young et al., 2003). Couples needed to meet the following criteria to participate in the study: (1) living in Canada, (2) living together in a domestic partnership (married, common-law) for more than one year, and (3) one or both members of the

couple telework full-time. I limited the sample to those living in Canada due to the potential of cross-national differences in economy and work culture playing a role in how couples experience work-life wellness. The criterion of couples who have been living together for at least one year was implemented to focus on those who are in committed long-term relationships. Couples who live separately or have been together for shorter periods may have a different experience of work-life wellness and their mutual relationship in general. The third criterion was necessary to ensure my participants had experience with the phenomenon that I was studying. Separate from these criteria, I kept the study open to couples with and without children, to capture a wider range of couples.

To recruit these participants, I distributed an advertisement for the study to various professional associations and remote work groups (Appendix A: Recruitment Email; Appendix B: List of Organizations and Groups). I also distributed the advertisement through my personal, educational, and professional networks. When someone expressed an interest in participating, I conducted a preliminary screening interview with each member of the couple over Zoom to assess their fit for the study (Appendix C: Screening Interview Protocol). I intended that participants would be purposively selected to represent a variety of employment situations and backgrounds. However, due to the low amount of people who were interested in participating and the timeline to complete my degree, I accepted all eligible couples for the study.

Couples were offered a monetary incentive to participate. I distributed a 25-dollar Amazon.ca gift card per participant (i.e., 50 dollars per couple) following the completion of the main interview. Incentives were provided to all participants who began the main interview, even if they needed to discontinue their participation without completing both interviews, which occurred with one couple.

## **Data Collection and Analysis Procedures**

I used an abbreviated form of A-PM that Young and colleagues (2021) recommend for time-limited research such as master's theses. This abbreviated A-PM consisted of a main interview and a second, member-checking, interview. I also used the recently created remote data collection adaptation of A-PM, which was necessary due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions in place at the time of data collection and the inclusion of participants from across Canada in the study (Campbell & Domene, 2022; Young et al., 2021). This online adaptation differs from the original in-person version of the method primarily in that research meetings are conducted using a video-conferencing platform rather than in-person. In addition, in the online adaptation, the member-checking process is divided into three separate interviews (one with each participant individually, and then one with the couple together), rather than a single multi-part interview.

### ***Main Interview***

Once a couple was accepted to participate in the study, I emailed the informed consent form to them (see Appendix D), and asked them to review, sign, and return the document to me prior to arranging the first interview. To ensure free consent of all participants, I contacted each member of the couple individually to complete the informed consent process. At the start of the main interview, I reviewed the informed consent form with the couple together and answered any questions they had. Then I asked for permission to video record the session. Altogether, the main interview took approximately two hours to complete per couple. This interview consisted of four parts:

1. To begin, both members of the couple and I engaged in a warm-up discussion, which contained general questions about the couple and their work situation. I also asked the couple to identify what aspects of work-life wellness are currently important to them



(Appendix E: Interview Protocol). The primary purpose of the warm-up was not to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. Instead, my goal was to identify topics for the participants to talk about, and to encourage the couple to interact with each other within the research setting, rather than to speak to me. As soon as the couple began to interact with each other, the interview moved on to the next part.

2. The second part of the main interview involved a joint conversation between the couple. I invited the couple to have a 15-to-20-minute conversation with each other about the aspects of work-life wellness that they identified as important during the warm-up. I turned off my camera, muted my microphone, and removed my headphones for this part of the interview. I invited them to text me when they were done. If they had not finished their conversation after 20 minutes, I returned to the session and asked them to stop. This occurred with 3 of the couples.
3. After a 10-minute recess to compile the videorecording of the joint conversation, we proceeded to the self-confrontation portion of the main interview. I conducted a separate self-confrontation session with each member of the couple individually. During these sessions, the participant and I replayed the videorecording of the joint conversation together, starting at the point in the recording where the couple began discussing aspects of work-life wellness. I paused the recording in 2-minute increments and asked the participant to share their thoughts, feelings, and goals for that segment of the conversation. This third part of the main interview was complete when both members of the couple had the opportunity to review their joint conversation. During the self-confrontation sessions, I asked the member of the couple who was not being interviewed to fill-out their demographic questionnaire (Appendix F).

4. In the final part of the main interview, I debriefed the participants individually, arranged to distribute the incentive, and reminded them of the next steps in the research process (i.e., distribution and review of the narratives).

### ***Within-Case Analysis***

In the A-PM, within-case analysis involves detailed review and coding of the interview manuscripts by a team of researchers discussing possible interpretations until a consensus understanding is reached (Young et al., 2021). In the present study, the team consisted of my supervisor, a doctoral student research assistant, and I (see the Research Team section of this chapter for additional information). The analysis process proceeded in two stages:

1. To start, I extracted the transcript from the meeting software (e.g., Zoom, Microsoft Teams) and reviewed it for accuracy. Using a pre-existing code list developed in previous A-PM studies, I worked collaboratively with a doctoral student research assistant to identify elements, functional steps, and goals in each two-minute segment of the joint conversation (Appendix G: Code List). This analysis process also involved referring to the transcripts of the self-confrontation sessions for additional context and understanding. The code list contained a list of verbal and non-verbal behaviours such as laughing, pausing, repeating, and validating (Jensen et al., 2022). The collaborative nature of the analysis process results in coding the most appropriate interpretations generated from researcher review of the manuscript. We linked together actions from the codes to identify functional steps for each segment. We then captured goals across segments from reviewing the transcript, codes, and functional steps. I compiled the results of this preliminary analysis process into individual and couple narrative summaries (around two

pages long) detailing actions and projects. Filler words were removed from the quotes that were included in the narrative summaries.

2. After the preliminary analysis was completed for a couple, all three members of the research team individually reviewed all the material for the couple (i.e., videorecording of the joint conversation, transcripts of all parts of the main interview, the write-up of the preliminary stage of analysis, and the narrative summaries) in preparation for an analysis meeting. In this meeting, the researchers engaged in a discussion of the results of the preliminary analysis to identify potential themes and joint projects in which the couple appears to be engaged. The narrative summaries were then modified to incorporate feedback from the analysis meeting.

### ***Member Checking Interview***

After completing the within-case analysis for each couple, I invited them back for a member checking interview to review, edit, and validate their narrative summaries. Consistent with the online adaptation of the A-PM protocol, these member checking interviews were divided into three 20-minute meetings:

1. First, I met with one member of the couple to review their individual narrative. The focus of this interview was to review their individual narrative with them, to confirm the accuracy of the researchers' interpretations of that participant's experience and to provide the participant with the opportunity to identify anything that they did not wish to share with their partner. Seven participants requested that some content be changed or removed from their individual narrative summary.
2. Next, I met with the other member of the couple to review their individual narrative, in the same way that I did with the first member of the couple.

3. Lastly, I met with both members of the couple together, to review the joint narrative.

The purpose of the review of the joint narrative was to confirm the accuracy of the research team's interpretations of the participants' joint actions around work-life wellness and to refine the description of the couple's work-life wellness projects. Four couples requested that some content be changed or removed from their joint narrative summary. Following the review of the joint narrative, I thanked both participants for their time.

### ***Cross-case Analysis***

After the member-checking interviews were completed for all participants, the research team conducted a cross-case analysis that was focused on identifying the patterns of actions, projects, and other themes that were present across the sample as a whole (Young et al., 2021). We explored broad patterns of recurrence (i.e., actions, projects, and themes that are present in at least half the sample) and also identified counter-examples. Counter-examples were defined as actions, projects, or other themes that were evident in only one or two couples, and which contradicted the pattern that was dominant across the sample. For example, if four of the couples had projects related to maintaining a flexible work schedule while one couple were engaged in a project to return to in-person work full time, it would be important to not only describe the common pattern, but also to report the existence of an exception to this pattern, and to describe that unique situation in more detail.

### **Research Team**

The research team for this thesis consisted of myself and two other researchers with prior experience using the A-PM to conduct career development research: Lindsay Warner (doctoral

student research assistant) and José Domene (faculty member and thesis supervisor). Each member of the research team had prior experiences that were relevant to the topic of this study.

For my Bachelor of Arts in Psychology thesis, funded by The Hunter Hub for Entrepreneurial Thinking, I researched work-life wellness of entrepreneurs who telework. I have published 3 articles on work-life wellness for teleworkers. I also have first-hand experience of pursuing work life wellness as a member of a teleworking couple. This experience includes working from home for the past two years while living with my partner who works at a traditional office building. Before moving in with my partner, I worked remotely (at school and home) for around four years while living alone. During my time living alone, I estimated my work-life wellness to be in the medium range because, even though I enjoyed my personal time, I could get away with overworking because I had no one around me to keep me accountable. The transition to working from a home with other residents present required me to make changes and adapt. For example, it took me a year to make my workspace (next to the kitchen) into a more private and comfortable area for working. My work-life wellness seemed to improve when I moved in with my partner, because spending time with a loved-one motivated me to focus on the zest of life outside of school and work. Prior to conducting this thesis, my expectations were that couples would have projects around privacy, household labour, scheduling activities, and personal time.

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, Ms. Warner's full-time employment abruptly moved online. She left this position to attend graduate school shortly thereafter. Her graduate studies included periods of both in-person and online work and learning. She also experienced periods where her partner also worked from their shared home, periods where he worked primarily from the office, and periods where the couple lived in different cities to pursue their

respective careers. For Ms. Warner, telework and the COVID-19 pandemic required adjustment on multiple fronts (e.g., creating an effective workspace at home, re-establishing work-life boundaries, embracing pet-related meeting interruptions, and finding alternative ways to connect with friends and colleagues), and these adjustments sometimes took a toll on her wellness. At the same time, online learning and telework allowed her to complete portions of her studies remotely from the same city as her partner, parents, and friends. Having access to social supports eased the transition of relocating to the city where her graduate program is located, especially until her partner was able to join her. At the beginning of this study, she expected couples to construct projects related to dividing household responsibilities, creating effective and private workspaces, and pursuing work-life balance. She also expected to observe couples' efforts to adapt to uncertainty and shifting relationship dynamics.

Dr. Domene experienced approximately two years of teleworking, which occurred during government- and institution-mandated periods of working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic. During that time, he and his romantic partner both experienced a deterioration in their wellness, despite efforts to adjust to Dr. Domene working from home full-time. However, Dr. Domene attributes this deterioration more to the situation created by the COVID-19 pandemic rather than to telework per se. At the beginning of this study, he expected that couples in this study would identify projects related to time-management, (re)negotiation of household responsibilities, and exercise/physical health. He also anticipated that couples would experience difficulties with pursuing work-life wellness goals together, particularly if both members of the couple are working at home full-time, or if the couple has young children.

## **Methodological Integrity**

To enhance the methodological integrity of the research process, my supervisor reviewed my data collection and coding procedures to ensure compliance with existing A-PM protocols. Furthermore, I maintained a detailed audit trail of all communications, interviews, and findings related to the research process, which my supervisor reviewed. I transcribed interviews verbatim with the help of the Zoom transcription feature to ensure accurate and comprehensive capturing of the data. For credibility, I used member checking interviews following the within-case analysis to validate that participants' experiences were properly summarized in my analysis. Feedback from participants during the member checking interviews also guided the research team in conducting the cross-case analysis.

Additionally, the consensus-based analysis approach was designed to decrease the influence of individual researchers' biases (Young et al., 2021). During the preliminary stage of within-case analysis, I debated the coding with Ms. Warner until we reached a consensus. For the second stage of within-case analysis, all three researchers reviewed and discussed the interpretations that were made in the first stage of analysis. The cross-case analysis also involved a consensus-based approach to diminish individual researcher bias.

In terms of the quality of this consensus-based analysis process, the atmosphere of the research team plays a role (Domene & Young, 2008). I safeguarded the integrity of the research team through directly addressing conflicts and deference. As the members of the research team come from different backgrounds, this strengthened the interpretation of the data. I reflected on the level of control I had over the research process and released control to members of the research team and participants as appropriate. All members of the research team had the same level of commitment to releasing control, which is important because, although I am the

principal investigator, other members of the team had more experience with the method and more education than I do, and one team member is my thesis supervisor.

Lastly, I triangulated multiple sources of information to support my understanding of remote working couples' wellness. Specifically, observation, interviews, participant reflection, and research team meetings all generated information to capture the complexity of couples' projects and actions related to work-life wellness. Furthermore, the A-PM protocol provided a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon by focusing on multiple aspects of action, including observed action, internal processes, and social meaning (Valach et al., 2002).



## Chapter 4: Findings

This study was designed to explore how the two members of a couple work together to formulate projects related to work-life wellness and how they act together to pursue these projects. Therefore, my findings include descriptions of (1) participants' experiences of negotiating and establishing goals for their work-life wellness (i.e., their work-life wellness projects), (2) the actions that couples jointly undertake to achieve their work-life wellness projects, and (c) additional themes related to the research question that were identified in the analysis process. After reviewing participant demographics, I will describe the within-case and cross-case findings that emerged from my study.

### Participant Demographics

Table 1 contains summary demographics for the 10 participants in including name, age, gender, work sector, years teleworking, and years living with their partner. Most participants chose to use pseudonyms, while some participants chose to use their real names. All participants teleworked except for one participant who was not employed. Most of the couples resided in Western Canada, except for couple 4, who lived in Atlantic Canada. There was a relatively restricted range of self-identified ethnic or cultural backgrounds across the sample, which included English Canadian (5), European (4), Latinx (1), and Caribbean (1) (some participants selected more than one background).

In terms of relationship status, 3 couples were common-law, and 2 couples were married. Time living together ranged from 1 to 40 years. Most of the couples did not have children, except for couple 3 who lived with their adult son. All couples presented as heterosexual;

however, individual sexual orientation varied. Participants self-identified as heterosexual (7), mostly straight with bi-curiosity (2), and bi-sexual (1).

**Table 1**

*Participant Demographics*

Couple	Name	Age	Gender	Work Sector	Years	Years Living
					Teleworking	Together
1	Clementine	32	Cis-woman	Healthcare	3	6
	Vernon	32	Cis-man	Information Technology	3	
2	Lindsay	29	Cis-woman	Not Applicable	0	2
	Harrison	29	Cis-man	Information Technology	3	
3	Colleen	62	Cis-woman	Healthcare	3	40
	William	64	Cis-man	Petrochemical	10	
4	Monica	32	Cis-woman	Healthcare	2	4
	Thomas	32	Cis-man	Science	1.5	
5	Ayla	31	Cis-woman	Healthcare	3	1
	Barry	32	Cis-man	Energy Management	2.5	

**Within-case Findings**

I present findings from the within-case analysis for each couple below, based on the content of the individual and joint narrative summaries that were created as part of the research

procedures described in Chapter 3 (Appendix I). However, in this thesis, all identifying information has been removed or altered to protect participant confidentiality.

### ***Couple 1: Clementine and Vernon***

**Background Information.** Vernon and Clementine have been common-law partners for more than 6 years and have no children. Vernon and Clementine have resided in a city in Western Canada with their cat for 1.5 years. Clementine teleworks 15 to 20 hours per week in healthcare research and Vernon teleworks 40 hours per week in the information technology sector. Vernon works in a private office in their apartment and Clementine works in the living room. Clementine is also a full-time graduate student (mostly in-person classes) and attends an internship (in-person) as part of her education program.

**Joint Projects.** Clementine and Vernon had 2 joint projects related to their work-life wellness. (1) Maintaining and fostering a thriving relationship as a couple despite changing life circumstances such as teleworking and relocating to a new city. (2) Collaborating to promote Vernon's and Clementine's overall health and wellbeing.

**Actions.** During the joint conversation, Clementine often provided topics for the couple to discuss. Clementine expressed pride in their relationship thriving throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and appreciated the positive impacts of teleworking on their relationship. Clementine described freedom around teleworking to spend time with others and Vernon separately. Throughout the conversation, Clementine validated Vernon and provided information for his decision making. Furthermore, Clementine summarized their working from home situation briefly through comparison of past and present experiences. Clementine used reflections and humour to actively listen to Vernon's experience of being online while lightening the mood.

Clementine shared her experiences and opinions of work-life wellness to Vernon, particularly related to distractions such as the television, video games, and housework.

Overall, throughout the joint conversation, Vernon seemed to go along with the conversation as prompted by Clementine and actively listened to Clementine. At the start of the conversation, Vernon shared his experience of working from home and clarified what topics are included under work-life wellness. Vernon listened and agreed with Clementine's positive experiences of working from home. As Vernon continued to describe his experience of working from home, he compared his past and present experiences. Vernon expressed pride in the couple's relationship getting through the COVID-19 pandemic and described how their relationship has adapted to working from home:

[I was] happy that we had, I guess, maybe thankful even that we had the opportunity to do it, because not everybody had a good COVID experience, right? Not everybody has had a healthy experience when they were forced to be isolated. And now we were forced to be isolated, and we continued to be fairly isolated, just by the nature of our lives and our work. And just I'm thankful that we are the people who, I guess, are just healthy enough and grateful that we can make it work.

Additionally, Vernon described impacts of teleworking on their cat and engaged in problem-solving around potentially getting a dog in the future. Vernon shared his experience, feelings, and desires around travelling. While Vernon shared his experiences of wellness, he defended his perspective in a lively debate with Clementine. Vernon tried to explain the problems that he experiences with focusing on his teleworking and how this relates to going to the gym and spending time with friends. Vernon also shared his experiences and challenges of working online and interacting with coworkers. Vernon elicited support from Clementine to face

his challenges with being online. Vernon reported that the large amount of time he spends online does not fit with his self-perceptions.

Clementine and Vernon took time during the conversation to share with each other their favourite aspects of working in the same space, such as having conversations and sharing mutual lunches. Overall, Clementine and Vernon's goal for their joint conversation was to discuss their individual and mutual experiences of teleworking. Throughout the conversation, the couple maintained a comfortable posture and appeared to be sustaining physical contact by touching legs. The couple's ideas blended together as they often finished each other's sentences and shared each other's perspectives. Parts of the conversation were emotionally light with a lot of laughter, and the couple seem to be in agreement with each other. In contrast, other sections of the conversation involved more debate and disagreement. However, even when discussing touchy subjects, this couple interacted in a way that was positive. Specifically, even though Clementine and Vernon disagreed on the relationship between spending time with friends and exercising, they quickly came to an agreement:

Clementine: Yeah, like I mean, obviously, still, you could be getting more exercise. Your friends don't have anything to do with that, necessarily. But I thought I...

Vernon: I was going to the gym with my friend in the city we used to live in and that also was a socialization thing.

Clementine: That's true. You had a buddy, yes.

**Themes.** The research team constructed 8 themes for this couple. (1) Lack of exercise was a focus in the conversation and included challenges with incorporating physical activity into a teleworking lifestyle with no commute or opportunity to walk around the office. (2) The couple discussed how teleworking impacts current and potential pets:

Clementine: I think our cat has benefited from us being home too, although maybe it has made him have attachment issues.

Vernon: Yeah, as we say this, he's like leaning against me right now.

Clementine: Yeah.

Vernon: No, that's true. It has definitely affected the cat. I think it's probably good; but, it definitely does give the cat a certain level of over attachment like maybe it's getting hard on the cat when we leave.

(3) Furthermore, Clementine and Vernon described challenges with distraction and focus related to their working location in the home (e.g., living room versus private home office). (4) The couple described their interactions with co-workers including gratitude for strong social connections and guilt for using work time to chat with co-workers. (5) The couple reflected on changes in the ways they socialize, including Vernon spending more time with friends online and the couple feeling more freedom in the evening to relax with friends since they spent all day with each other. Vernon stated that the large amount of time he spends online does not fit with his self-perceptions:

I think my whole life is online right now between, as you said, like, so I work on my computer, when I socialize with friends it's on the computer because they don't live here, and when I'm just alone, and I'm looking for something to do, I'm on the computer doing my own thing. And I don't think of myself as that person; but, I'm the essence of that person. I am like entirely just a digital life, right?

(6) There seemed to be blurred boundaries around work, with the couple losing track of time, working outside of the traditional workday, and using personal space in the home for work activities. (7) The couple also discussed work flexibility related to optimal work hours, adapting

schedules, and multi-tasking personal and work activities. Clementine expressed her enjoyment of multi-tasking during work:

I have so much flexibility because I just have certain dates I have to do things by. And I think that provides me with a lot of flexibility, because so much of my work time I get done just like watching TV and doing it on the side. So, that allows me to have a lot of flexibility to do other things that I wouldn't be able to do if I was like in an office per se.

### *Couple 2: Lindsay and Harrison*

**Background Information.** Harrison and Lindsay have been common-law partners for 2 years and do not have children. They have resided in a city in Western Canada with their dog for the past 1.5 years. Lindsay is a full-time student with in-person classes who occasionally does schoolwork from home. Harrison teleworks 40 hours per week in software development. Harrison works in a private office in their apartment while Lindsay completes her schoolwork in their living room.

**Joint Projects.** Lindsay and Harrison were pursuing 2 joint projects related to their work-life wellness. (1) Balancing time alone with time together considering Harrison teleworks. (2) Keeping the puppy happy so that they can go about their lives and work in a way that is comfortable and convenient.

**Actions.** Throughout the joint conversation, Lindsay actively listened to Harrison describe his experience by acknowledging, approving, and paraphrasing. Lindsay seemed calm and petted the dog throughout the conversation, even though she described feeling anxious about topics related to enjoying alone time and her contribution to household chores during her individual interview. Lindsay described her experience of Harrison teleworking related to distribution of household labour and received validation from Harrison about her role in the

household labour. Lindsay provided her own evaluations and perspectives related to Harrison's experience of teleworking and interruptions. Lindsay acknowledged the couple's accomplishment in learning how to live together and how to manage distractions for Harrison with his experience of ADHD. In their individual interviews, both members of the couple had similar reflections about Harrison's telework and ADHD:

Lindsay: I feel like that was a pretty significant turning point for us in learning about ADHD. And I feel like that really took us a long way into terms of being able to understand each other better and cohabitate better. And so, I think when I brought that up there was definitely a feeling of pride. This feels like an accomplishment that we've made together.

Harrison: It took a lot of learning on both of our parts to figure out what kind of things does ADHD affect when it comes to working, distraction, and hyperfocus.... So, I feel like acknowledging this stuff out loud in this conversation feels good because it reminds me that we have come a long way with figuring out how to cohabitate with me working from home all the time.

Additionally, Lindsay directed the conversation towards discussing Harrison's experience of teleworking versus working in a traditional office setting. Lindsay actively listened to Harrison speak about the positives of teleworking and talked about how the teleworking situation works for both of them. Lindsay communicated her contentment with Harrison enjoying his teleworking arrangement. After Lindsay gave Harrison an opportunity to share his experience and enjoyment of his workspace, she changed the topic to talk about her own experience and appreciation of alone time.



Harrison shared a lot throughout the main interview and often gestured with his hands while speaking. In the beginning of the conversation, Harrison described his experience of teleworking related to interruptions to the workday (e.g., their dog). After describing his challenges, Harrison outlined positive aspects of working from home. Harrison presented a nuanced view by exploring the how distractions can sometimes help him to manage his focus. Harrison continued the conversation by sharing his perspective on how far the couple has come in terms of their ability to manage distractions while he is working. Later in the conversation, Harrison compared and contrasted teleworking and working from the office. This process included highlighting some of the positives of working from the office, even though he personally prefers working from home. Particularly, Harrison shared with humour his appreciation of his teleworking routine in comparison to when he worked from a traditional office. Harrison also talked about how much he likes not having to commute to work. Furthermore, Harrison provided a thorough description of his workspace, including his enjoyment of the space and changes he has made to promote that enjoyment (e.g., adding noise-dampening curtains). Harrison described the separation between his personal life and work and how this separation is facilitated by dedicating a space in the home to work:

It really feels like the distance between our desks really helps in the mind set separation.

When we go into these spaces, we're working, plus the curtains help block sound from leaving the room. This room has almost a sound wall, especially if the AC unit is on.

The couple had their joint conversation in Harrison's office and petted their dog throughout the conversation. Lindsay and Harrison also often talked simultaneously and provided minimal encouragers such as "mhm" and "yeah." Lindsay and Harrison faced each other for most of the conversation, except for when Harrison tilted towards the camera while

describing his office. Harrison talked the most during the conversation, perhaps because it was mainly focused on Harrison's experience.

**Themes.** The research team agreed on 7 themes for couple 2. (1) The first theme was ADHD as a motivator to begin teleworking and an influence on maintaining focus. (2) The second theme was how the couple has overcome past teleworking obstacles. Lindsay and Harrison discussed how they have adapted to teleworking:

Harrison: I feel like, even when you are working from home, you give me the space to kind of focus on my work. And I appreciate that.

Lindsay: I think I've gotten better at not just like running in to tell you random stuff all the time. That was definitely a thing before.

Harrison: Yeah, it was definitely a problem in Europe, when we were in the same room for a while, before I moved to the kitchen. We were just distracting each other... that is something that has like, I hate to say, gotten better because it makes it sound like I don't like when you tell me stuff but it's gotten better...

Lindsay: But it's distracting. And I recognize that part of that has been us both being more aware of ADHD stuff and talking about that a lot and I think that has helped me.

(3) Theme 3 was the flexibility of teleworking. (4) Theme 4 was Harrison avoiding the hassles of commuting. Harrison described his past commute when he used to work from the traditional office:

And so, working from home, even with even the fact that I wake up early, isn't that much of a problem, because I can just get up and essentially get straight to work... I don't need to worry about getting up, doing my morning routine, commuting, getting set up at my desk, and then commuting back home later. I could just start when I want, stop when I'm

done, and then I can immediately do whatever else I want to do when the work is done without time to get on some crowded bus. I'm like oh, what if I don't get on in time, and now I don't have a seat and I have to stand for like 30 minutes on a bus but like with a bunch of other strangers. During the wintertime, commuting is the worst... freezing my butt off waiting for a bus or a train. It sucks and so working from home can be really nice for that.

(5) Theme 5 revolved around division of household labour, considering Harrison is at home the most and sometimes takes on more chores and pet-care responsibilities. (6) Theme 6 was the decision on who gets a private office in the home when there is only one available. (7) The final theme was that this couple also discussed several benefits of traditional office work, such as socializing and cues to take breaks. Harrison described what he liked about working from the traditional office:

We were chatting with people at their cubicles on the way to and from the kitchen area or going out to lunch with coworkers. Now, we'll just be working and having meetings. It's a break from the focus at work but there's no real social element.... It is nice to have that break otherwise I'll forget to eat lunch until it's pretty late.

### *Couple 3: Colleen and William*

**Background Information.** Colleen and William have been married for around 40 years and live together with their 25-year-old son and a dog in a city in Western Canada. Colleen teleworks around 37.5 hours per week in the healthcare sector and William teleworks around 20 hours per week as a consultant in the petrochemical industry. William and Colleen both work in private offices on different floors of their home. Colleen started teleworking when the COVID-

19 pandemic restrictions started in Canada (March of 2020) and William started teleworking about 10 years ago.

**Joint Projects.** Colleen and William had 3 joint projects related to their work-life wellness. (1) Planning for a vacation: figuring out a way to take a vacation together while considering work schedules. (2) Planning for retirement: overhauling financial portfolio to ensure retirement. (3) Sustaining the homeostasis of working from home.

**Actions.** During the joint conversation, Colleen and William examined their experience of teleworking through sharing their individual perspectives and listening to each other. To start the conversation, Colleen described her experience while directly asking for William's perspective about work-life wellness and teleworking. Colleen defended her opinions about work-life wellness and often transitioned the focus to William by asking him questions. Colleen also directed the conversation away from topics that she thought were unrelated to work-life wellness.

Throughout the joint conversation, William described his perspectives with humor to get his point across in a friendly way while following Colleen's lead in the conversation:

William: You plug in your phone in your head. You just walk around the house all the time and I never know where you're going to be or where you're working. Are you working now? Oh, she's talking on the phone.

Colleen: Or I'm talking on my headset.

William: You're talking on your headset. I don't know if you're listening to something or you're talking to someone. I need to get you a red light on top of your head that says online.

William was willing to co-construct his teleworking experience with Colleen and provide his opinion of Colleen's work-life wellness. Lastly, William expressed a desire to vacation and telework abroad and remained optimistic about finding solutions to obstacles.

Colleen and William both hoped to have a productive conversation about work-life wellness and further understand each other's perspectives. Colleen and William were open with each other throughout the conversation and were willing to disagree on the human experience of interruptions to zoom meetings, Colleen's physical activity at home, and the time of their last vacation. The couple took the time to discuss boundary-setting around them both teleworking such as privacy for Colleen when she is teaching and taking care of their dog throughout the day:

William: I think we have achieved homeostasis. You pretty much leave me alone to do my thing. I pretty much leave you alone to do your thing except when the dog starts getting demanding.

Colleen: Somebody needs to stop what they're doing to look after...

William: It seems like I'm always the one that has to break my day up in order to see those needs though.

Colleen: Yeah, well that's because I'm on the clock.

William: I know, it's kind of annoying though.

Colleen: My schedule is not as flexible as yours.

Around the end of the conversation, the couple tried to come to a common understanding through problem solving.

**Themes.** Five themes were constructed by the research team from couple 3's data. (1)  
The couple discussed exercise, including individual and joint initiatives to get exercise due to

lack of opportunity for organic ways to move. Colleen described their desire for more physical activity during the warm-up:

I think we're trying to balance our physical activity for both of us and so we've gone to the club. So, we just started playing pickleball together there.

(2) The couple also discussed pets and how to manage shared responsibility for the dog during the workday. (3) Colleen and William discussed the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on teleworking, including their son moving home and having to telework for years instead of a few weeks. Colleen provided more information about this transition during the warm-up discussion portion of the main interview:

It took me a while to get my whole office set up, because, at first, I thought it was temporary, so I just was using my tablet. But now I have a nice little setup here in our granddaughter's spare room, and she's quite loath to share that with me.

(4) In a similar vein, Colleen and William discussed how the 2008 recession impacted their employment and financial situation:

William: Vacations are hard.

Colleen: Yes, that's true. We haven't had a vacation in 5 years?

William: We were down in the United States of America when some other people were here and set off the alarm.

Colleen: That was in 20...18.

William: No... was it?

Colleen: Yeah. It's 5 years ago.

William: Yeah, because then the pandemic happened. I always go back and forth to Europe so...

Colleen: But that's not really about working like teleworking. That's more just about what our financial situation is and more steady income and the downturn in the oil.

William: Yes, the implosion.

(5) The couple also explored flexibility related to their differing abilities to alter their schedules and the possibility of teleworking abroad.

#### ***Couple 4: Monica and Thomas***

**Background Information.** Monica and Thomas have been married for around 4 years and live together in a city in Atlantic Canada. Monica teleworks 20 hours per week in the healthcare sector and Thomas teleworks 32 hours per week in the science sector. Thomas and Monica work on separate floors of their home. Monica and Thomas started teleworking 2 years ago and 1.5 years ago, respectively.

**Joint Projects.** Monica and Thomas were working on 2 joint projects related to their work-life wellness. (1) Understanding and figuring out together how to make working from home more comfortable for Monica, especially on days when both members of the couple are at home. (2) Fostering an active lifestyle through movement and exercise within and outside of the workday.

**Actions.** During the conversation, Monica described her experience of working from home and asked Thomas for his perspective. Monica actively listened to Thomas' opinions on their work situation while providing her own ideas. Monica vented about being stuck upstairs during the workday. Additionally, she expressed her desire to interact with coworkers, which she was not able to do in her current teleworking situation:

I wish I had coworkers, because I would get to talk to them about what's going on with clients and stuff that I can't necessarily gain insight from you because you're not in the same field. So that's a little bit of a complex area for me.

Throughout the joint conversation, Thomas listened and followed along in the conversation while providing some details about his experience. For example, Thomas explained his preference for virtual interactions with coworkers rather than in-person interactions:

I think it would be more annoying being in the office. When I was there before, people would always come to my cubicle and talk to me, and I would be always distracted, and I just found that annoying. When you kind of eliminate that through like a Teams message, I can choose when I want to answer my Teams message and it's not somebody in my face.

Additionally, Thomas listened to Monica and sympathised with her experience. Thomas provided Monica with suggestions to help her feel more comfortable being upstairs. Lastly, Thomas described what he liked about working downstairs and expressed content for his current situation.

In the beginning of the conversation, both members of the couple initiated and engaged in a conversation about work-life wellness. They tried to understand their experiences of interacting with coworkers and each other throughout the workday. Furthermore, Monica and Thomas attempted to come to a mutual understanding of Monica's experience of being upstairs during the workday and they tried to understand the differences between their experiences of their at-home workspaces:

Monica: I have to just be upstairs and be in the bedroom. I don't get to kind of be in my own space this especially when you have meetings. I come down, and you have meetings,



and I can't just watch TV or listen to music, I have to get my food and go back upstairs.

Yeah, I think it kind of removes an area for me like I may not have an outside office, but I'm stuck upstairs as long as you're working.

In contrast, Thomas appreciates his current work set-up: "I don't really see any anything I would change.... Right now I like my setup."

**Themes.** The consensus-based analysis process yielded 12 themes for couple 4. (1) The couple maintains space and privacy during the workday by working on separate floors. (2) They both appreciate having a break from each other once a week when Thomas goes into the office. During the joint conversation, Monica and Thomas agreed that they enjoy Thomas' office days:

Thomas: Right now, I like my setup. I go to the office once a week, and it's a nice little break for me.

Monica: And for me.

(3) Furthermore, Monica is considerate of Thomas when working from home (e.g., walking softly on the floor upstairs, even though Thomas does not mind her making some noise). (4) Monica feels stuck upstairs and gets less physical activity (e.g., less walking, not watching TV). In contrast, Thomas likes this arrangement: "Yeah. I appreciate being down here because I can walk around, and I can go to the kitchen and give my stretches." (5) Working from home allows the couple to avoid the hassles of commuting (and for Monica, to avoid the expense of renting office space). (6) The conversation was low energy as both members of the couple were feeling tired. (7) Monica felt dismissed by some of Thomas' actions, such as not asking her questions about her experience or jumping to problem solving, which she interpreted as an inability to understand and empathize with her experience (theme from her individual interview). (8) The couple felt relaxed and comfortable with working from home rather than the traditional

office since there are less distractions at home and more flexibility. (9) The couple contrasted having coworkers and no coworkers: Thomas prefers to interact with co-workers virtually (less distraction than in-person), while Monica wishes she has co-workers to debrief her work experiences with (since she and Thomas are in different professions). (10) There was an impact of the research context on the conversation, with both members of the couple reporting that the joint conversation was atypical of their interaction style. (11) Thomas felt like the research context prevented topic changes as would happen in a natural context: “the unnatural part of it is that we have to stay on topic. Probably by now we would have switched topics or something like that.” (12) Finally, there were also verbal (e.g., saying “we are both uncomfortable”) and non-verbal (e.g., pauses in conversation) actions indicating discomfort with the conversation being recorded.

### ***Couple 5: Ayla and Barry***

**Background Information.** Ayla and Barry have lived together for approximately 1 year in a city in Western Canada. Ayla teleworks approximately 21 hours per week in the healthcare sector and Barry teleworks 38 hours per week in the energy management sector. Both members of the couple have their own private offices in their home. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, Ayla started working from home around March of 2020. Barry started working from home a few months later, beginning in the Fall of 2020.

**Joint Projects.** Ayla and Barry were focused on one joint project related to their work-life wellness: Figuring out how to engage in activities outside of the house as a couple while balancing Ayla’s need for spontaneity and variety and Barry’s need for scheduling and routine.

**Actions.** Throughout the joint conversation, Ayla actively listened to Barry while sharing her own perspectives and contrasting their differing needs and experiences. She then expressed

her opinions about their schedules and imagined what it would be like to have a more consistent routine. Ayla shared her desire to go paddleboarding during the weekday and problem-solved around their different schedules. As the conversation continued, Ayla described their daily routines while teleworking and acknowledged Barry's perspective. Ayla explained how important it is for her to get out of the house and contrasted that with Barry's desire for routine. As she actively listened to Barry, Ayla provided her perspective on his desire for routine and expressed her own desire for spontaneity:

Yeah, I think the interesting thing is that different things cause us stress. So, for you not having a plan, the earlier you can plan, the less stress you're going to have, right? So, if you know, 3 weeks from now, we're going to take a day off and go do something that will be no stress for you, because you can plan for that, you can be ready for it. Whereas for me, that causes me more stress, because what if that's the day I need to do a lot of work.

She explored how the couple has dealt with these different needs. Ayla also actively listened to Barry justify his desire for planned or indoor activities. She explained the importance of leaving the house for her social life and work-life balance and contrasted her experience to Barry's experience.

At the beginning of the joint conversation, Barry shared his experience of a past moment where work-life balance was difficult including his opinions and reactions. Furthermore, Barry described the couple's different needs for routine. Barry expressed his needs and desires while setting boundaries around his work schedule and considering what has worked in past summers:

I want to [go paddleboarding during a workday], but I also have a job. As much as I'd like to go out it is also very important to get a work-out in or generally just not work at 8 PM.

Barry shared his experience of workday scheduling while acknowledging Ayla's perspectives. Barry expressed satisfaction with their current office set-up and listened to Ayla's perspective on their daily routine. Barry actively listened to Ayla with interest and curiosity. The conversation then shifted to a discussion on the connection between work-life wellness and Barry's chronic injury. Barry provided information on how his injury plays into him having less desire to engage in outdoor activities than Ayla:

When I'm healthy and can move my legs, I'm the same way as I need to get of the house. That's like a huge priority. But now, I'm just in pain, if I do. So, I do just want to sit at home.

As the conversation progressed, Barry actively listened to Ayla describe their different needs for routine. Barry provided further justification for his desire for planned activities. Additionally, Barry communicated his appreciation for indoor activities. Barry listened to Ayla and clarified his experiences and needs.

Barry and Ayla had a practical and focused joint conversation about their daily routines and hobbies. They started the conversation by communicating openly about a past point of friction. They problem-solved around Ayla's desire for spontaneous outdoor activities in contrast to Barry's desire for planning activities ahead of time:

Barry: I think we pick some days so like one day a week that I don't work until eventually I need to come back and that is fine.

Ayla: Yeah, the thing that'll be nice this summer, too is that you have Fridays off. So, we can do that on Fridays, too.

They also explored their daily routine in comparison to other teleworking couples and tried to understand their different needs to leave the house. As the conversation continued, they reflected on their relationship in terms of their different needs for routine.

**Themes.** The within-case analysis of couple 5's conversation led to the construction of 10 themes for this couple. (1) The couple intentionally chose a house with two offices, one for each member of the couple. The couple perceived that this has made a big positive difference in managing their work-life wellness. (2) Barry works for a company based in an earlier time-zone, which allows afternoons and evenings for activities and socializing. (3) Ayla started teleworking due to COVID-19 pandemic. (4) Graduate school impacts Ayla's personal life, and Ayla prioritizes outdoor activities over indoor activities to maintain work-life separation (e.g., obligation to continue doing schoolwork when at home). Ayla explained why she does not have hobbies at home in her individual interview:

I don't give myself things that I'm really interested in, because I will take any excuse not to write my dissertation. I will clean the house rather than my dissertation. So, if I've got a hobby that I really like at home, there's no way I'm doing anything on my paper.

(5) Ayla's social life and hobbies are mainly outside the house, while Barry engages in social activities and hobbies from home. (6) Barry reflected on his chronic injury and feeling like he cannot do what he used to, especially outdoor activities. Barry's feelings about going outside are in tension with Ayla's desire to do outdoor activities. Even though he is frustrated with his current situation, Barry is hopeful for the future when he has recovered from his injury:

Yeah, I would say frustration in that when Ayla talks about when she finishes work, she just wants to go outside. It used to be me and I'm frustrated that it can't be me, all the time. Yeah, so, it's a disappointment, as well.... I'm thinking about all those activities

and the life, the activity that I used to do, and I hope to do in the future. And how that would be different than what it is today.

(7) The members of this couple have different work styles: making plans versus being spontaneous as related to stress management (e.g., planning ahead is a stress relief for Barry, but it is a source of stress for Ayla), personality (e.g., Barry is disciplined while Ayla considers herself as having less discipline), and differing schedules (e.g., grad student versus full-time employee). (8) The couple has a preference for talking things out, they are able to have comfortable and open conversations to maintain work-life wellness while accounting for the couple's differences in interests, desires/ "preferences [that] can clash", work styles, etc. (9) Barry and Ayla are happy with how far they have come as a couple. (10) Many of Barry's friends are online and he can relax with them online; in contrast, Ayla's social world is much more in the external physical world and Barry is supportive of Ayla's friendships. Barry and Ayla directly discussed their different approaches to socialization:

Ayla: You can be very social and very engaged with the world from inside the house like I'm even thinking all your friends are online, right?

Barry: Yeah.

Ayla: So, something that you might want to do to relax when you need is like, play online with your friend. Whereas, I do not have that, like I honestly, I socialize with my friends outside of the house.

### **Cross-Case Findings**

The research team identified many similarities and differences across couples that contribute to answering the research question: *How do teleworking couples construct and*

*cultivate work-life wellness together?* Below, I will outline the joint projects and actions that were constructed from the cross-case analysis.

### ***Joint Projects***

Across the five couples, there were a variety of individualized projects and one project category related to managing and adapting telework to meet individual and relationship needs.

**Individualized Projects.** Couples had a variety of unique projects. For example, couple 2 focused on keeping their puppy happy so that they can go about their lives and work in a way that is comfortable and convenient. Lindsay (couple 2) shared that “navigating [their] dog is part of the picture, because he is a barky dog. So, Harrison has to deal with that a lot more than [she does] because he's at home all the time.” As another example, one of the projects that couple 3 was pursuing was planning for retirement, including overhauling their financial portfolio to ensure retirement. William (couple 3) joked about their financial circumstances:

Colleen: I mean I could get more pension if I waited until 70 but I don't know if there's any real advantage to that other than that I have 3 more years of salary so it's really the salary that I'm missing out on if I retire, which is actually a fairly significant amount of money, too.

William: Depending on our situation, too.

Colleen: Yep, it depends what the market does.

William: Keep buying lottery tickets or start buying lottery tickets because we haven't done that.

**Managing and Adapting Telework.** Furthermore, all couples were pursuing projects related to managing and adapting telework to meet their individual and relationship needs (Table 2). Couples wanted to manage telework in relation to a variety of needs including fostering a

thriving relationship, balancing their time, sustaining a homeostasis, being comfortable, and engaging in activities. For example, couple 1 wanted to foster a thriving relationship even though their lives were in flux from relocating to a new city and teleworking. Clementine described how she views their experience of teleworking: “Despite being around each other so much and working together, you could see that we would butt heads more. But... I think we've done a really good job of managing.” For couple 2, Lindsay described how she finds separation from Harrison during the workday when they are both at home:

When we're here at the same time on a weekday, we both have work to do, we still get that separation where we're doing our own thing for a while. We're not just like in each other space the whole day, every day, or anything.

Similarly, William (couple 3) suggested that their homeostasis while teleworking was related to giving each other space throughout the day:

I think we have achieved homeostasis. You pretty much leave me alone to do my thing. I pretty much leave you alone to do your thing except when the dog starts getting demanding.

In contrast, couple 4 focused on increasing Monica's comfort level while teleworking. Monica and Thomas discuss Monica's comfort related to the layout of their teleworking set-up:

Thomas: So, do you think the layout is definitely impacting you? like, how I'm downstairs.

Monica: Well, yeah, because I don't get to come down and watch TV and chill.

Lastly, couple 5 wanted to figure out how to balance Ayla's desire for spontaneity with Barry's need for routine while engaging in activities outside of the home. Ayla expressed her need to get out of the house if she teleworks:



On the days where I go out and work, and I come home, I'm good. I just want to stay at home. I'm done. I've been out in the world. That was a lot. I had a drive, I'm done.

Whereas, if I work from home all day, I feel the need to go out into the world in some capacity.

**Table 2**

*Projects Related to Managing and Adapting Telework to meet their Individual and Relationship Needs*

Couple	Project
1	Maintaining and fostering a thriving relationship as a couple despite changing life circumstances such as teleworking and relocating to a new city.
2	Balancing time alone with time together considering Harrison teleworks.
3	Sustaining the homeostasis of working from home.
4	Understanding and figuring out together how to make working from home more comfortable for Monica, especially on days when both members of the couple are at home.
5	Figuring out how to engage in activities outside of the house as a couple while balancing Ayla's need for spontaneity and variety and Barry's need for scheduling and routine.

### *Actions*

Across the five couples, there were 4 common patterns of observed action during the interview and 4 patterns of participant-reported actions that occurred outside of the interview. During the joint conversation portion of the research interview, participants (1) used humour to lighten serious conversational topics, (2) exhibited non-verbal signs of connection, (3) openly

expressed perspectives, experiences, and needs, and (4) collaborated and worked as a team. Outside of the interview, participants reported (1) actions that reflected respect for boundaries, (2) telework impacting how they interact, (3) engaging in physical activity and exercise, and (4) having ongoing open conversations to resolve telework issues.

**Using Humour to Lighten Serious Conversational Topics.** For three of the couples (couples 1, 3, and 4), humour was used to diffuse tension and increase friendliness. For example, in couple 1, Clementine expressed humour while discussing training a potential dog:

Vernon: My parents sent their pets to doggy daycare.... this is good for these dogs like send them off to play with their buddies for a day. I think it's a great idea.

Clementine: It's like sending your kids off to a playdate.

For couple 4, humour helped Monica feel less annoyed with the lack of walking space in the area of the house where she teleworks: "It is funny that the only thing I can do is walk like a couple steps in and out, but I know that [the humour] was diffusing my annoyance at that point."

**Non-verbal Signs of Connection.** Most couples (couples 1, 2, 3, and 5) tended to maintain closeness through sitting in proximity to each other and maintaining eye contact during their joint conversation. For example, couple 1 touched legs throughout the conversation while sitting on the same couch. Couple 2 also sat close to each other on a couch while keeping an attentive posture. Also, couples 3 and 5 made and sustained eye contact throughout the conversation.

**Openly Expressing Perspectives, Experiences, and Needs.** All couples shared openly with each other. Couple 1 was willing to share individual perspectives and shared feelings, ideas, and information with each other. Couple 2 felt comfortable sharing their needs with each other.

For example, Harrison explained how he is inconvenienced by checking for packages during the workday:

It's kind of come up a couple of times recently, it's like not even that big of a deal, but it's like when like you've had packages delivered and you're just like, "Oh, can you check?" I know I need to check, but I know if I leave the dog is awake now. If I've got meetings coming up and now the dog is no longer in snoozie mode. Then that means that like he's going to be worked up during that time.

Couple 3 was especially candid with each other during the joint conversation. Part of this pattern of action may be attributed to their long marriage. Couple 4 was also open to sharing struggles and grievances. Lastly, couple 5 expressed their desires around boundaries and schedules.

**Collaboration/Working as a Team.** Most couples (1, 2,3, and 5) had a collaborative conversation. Couple 1 interacted in a friendly positive style, even when expressing disagreement. Lindsay and Harrison (couple 2) finished each other's sentences, elaborated on what their partner said, and reassured each other. Couple 3 problem-solved and identified solutions. William and Colleen (couple 3) explored the possibility of teleworking while taking a vacation:

William: There's no reason we couldn't take a trip to the United States of America. You could work part-time from home from the office there.

Colleen: Well, that's true like take part vacation days. I've actually thought about taking half days of vacation instead of full days. And then so you work half a day and then play half a day.

William: So yeah, you play in the morning when it's cool, and then when it's hot in the day you sit in the air conditioning and do your work

Colleen: That could work actually. Maybe we should consider that.

Couple 5 compromised and negotiated to meet their differing needs for spontaneity and variety versus scheduling and routine.

However, even for couples who usually operate as team, there was sometimes a lack of understanding. For example, Ayla (couple 5) perceived that Barry lacked understanding about her being in graduate school:

If you are not currently a grad student, it's very hard to understand grad student life. I'm not allowed to have hobbies. I don't give myself things that I'm really interested in, because I will take any excuse not to write my dissertation.... That's hard to describe to Barry, because he's not in grad school, but also because he's a very disciplined person.

Similarly, Barry thought Ayla lack understanding about his chronic injury and ability to do outdoor activities. In couple 4, Monica perceived Thomas as dismissive of her experience at specific points throughout the conversation.

**Actions that Reflect Respect for Boundaries.** Most couples (2, 3, 4, and 5) acted in ways that indicated respect for each other's boundaries. In couple 2, Lindsay intentionally gave Harrison focus time throughout the workday through minimizing interruptions. Lindsay reflected on how they have improved since first living together:

Lindsay: I think I've gotten better at not just like running in to tell you random stuff all the time. That was definitely a thing before.

Harrison: Yeah, it was definitely a problem in Europe, when we were in the same room for a while.

Couple 3 respected each other's time and closed their doors when they were working. Monica (couple 4) was considerate of Thomas when working from home including walking softly on the floor upstairs, even though Thomas does not mind her making some noise. In couple 5, Barry respected Ayla's need for privacy when her sound machine was on, and her door was closed.

**Telework Affecting How They Interact with Each Other.** For three of the couples (Couples 1, 2, and 5), some of their relationship dynamics seemed to be influenced by teleworking. Due to teleworking, couple 1 reported greater closeness in relationship including shared proximity and more time together during the workday. Couple 1 also spent more time apart from each other after the workday. Clementine (couple 1) explained why she feels more comfortable doing activities without Vernon in the evenings: "I see you all day, I can leave in the evening and it's not like I'm missing out." Likewise, couple 2 found moments to connect throughout the day including shared dinners and talking in the kitchen. After teleworking, couple 5 occasionally got out of the house together and socialized.

**Engaging in Physical Activity and Exercise Together.** Some couples (1, 3, and 5) described exercising as a couple. For example, couple 1 reported doing yoga together and going outside for walks. Couple 3 enjoyed playing pickleball together and finding other ways to be active. Couple 5 mentioned moving their bodies through paddleboarding and skiing. However, the couples in this study also found that their activity levels had decreased since starting to telework. Couple 1 described challenges incorporating physical activity into their teleworking lifestyle, especially due to the lack of commute and loss of opportunity to walk around at the traditional office. Couple 3 also perceived that teleworking did not include as many organic ways to move as working at a traditional office. In couple 4, Monica felt stuck upstairs and unable to

walk around the house. In contrast, Thomas (couple 4) liked working downstairs since he was able to “walk around, and [could] go to knuckle a bar and give [his] stretches.”

**Having Ongoing Open Conversations.** Most couples (couples 2, 3, 4, and 5) had ongoing conversations as a way to resolve issues that arose related to telework and work-life wellness (and other issues, as well). Couple 2 had overcome and solved many past obstacles to teleworking including Lindsay’s past feelings about teleworking and creating a better physical set-up. Couple 3 problem-solved, identified solutions, and negotiated possibilities related to finances and vacations. Couple 4 had ongoing conversation to check-in on their teleworking situation. Similarly, Couple 5 had regular conversations about areas of contention or difference with a focus on what has “worked best” for both of them. Ayla elaborated on her conversations with Barry during her individual interview:

I was thinking back to our previous summer and remembering that, for the most part, I just have good memories. About last summer, it's not like we were having fights every week about what to do. It was more just like having conversations about when it worked best for both of us and compromising.

### ***Additional Themes***

In addition to the preceding patterns of projects and actions, the research team also concluded that the subsequent themes were common across a majority of the couples: (1) the role of pets, (2) teleworking and flexibility, (3) benefits of working in a traditional office, (4) impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on telework, (5) physical space for telework, and (6) overcoming past teleworking obstacles.

**The Role of Pets.** Pets appear to be an important consideration the couples’ managing their work-life wellness while teleworking for all couples who had a pet (Couples 1, 2, 3, and 5).

Most of these couples talked about their animal or had an animal present during the conversation. Couple 1 conversed about the implications of teleworking on their cat and potential dog while their cat sat with them on the couch. Couple 2 was playing with and petting their dog throughout the conversation. Additionally, couple 2 discussed the care of their dog at length and were working on a project related to keeping their dog happy. To elaborate, during their warm-up, Lindsay and Harrison agreed that taking care of their dog is essential to decreasing disruptions to the workday:

Lindsay: In terms of priorities, in terms of you having your own space, I feel like managing our dog ends up being a bit of a priority.

Harrison: Or at least taken care of in terms of like his bathroom needs. So, if he needs to go in the morning, it can sometimes be the case of sleeping all day. It's important that he's not disruptive.

In their joint conversation, couple 3 discussed managing responsibility for the dog during the workday. Lastly, couple 5 petted their dog in their interview and Ayla noted that petting the dog may have helped them to be calmer during the conversation.

**Teleworking and Flexibility.** For all five couples, teleworking has contributed to their work-life wellness by providing them with more flexibility. Couple 1 talked about the flexibility of their work schedule and time including being able to work at optimal times. Clementine (couple 1) also enjoyed the flexibility of multitasking during work including watching television and doing chores. Vernon was also able to relocate cities without changing jobs due to teleworking.

Couple 2 discussed the overall flexibility of teleworking, including many aspects such as schedule, attire, and location. Harrison (couple 2) found that teleworking accommodated his

individual health needs and decreased his daily discomfort by removing his commute. For couple 3, there was a difference in flexibility between the two of them due to the different nature of the kind of telework they were engaged in – Colleen is “on the clock” while William does consultant work. Due to the flexibility of his work, William does errands and household tasks during the workday. Colleen and William also discussed the possibility of teleworking or taking half-day vacations while visiting other countries. Couple 4 talked about feeling relaxed and comfortable while teleworking since there are less distractions at home and more flexibility. Additionally, couple 4 liked avoiding the hassles of commuting including paying a toll to cross a bridge.

Thomas described his commute, which he takes once per week, in the warm-up conversation:

I personally like [teleworking]. No commute times for me to get to work. I have to cross a bridge. I have to pay toll often. The bridges is packed with traffic. And then I have to also prepare the day before for my lunch. It just is more convenient.

Monica also decreased her work-related expenses by not needing to rent office space since she worked from home. As another example, Barry (couple 5) works for a company based in an earlier time-zone, which allows afternoons and evenings for activities and socializing.

**Benefits of Working in a Traditional Office.** Three of the couples (2, 3, and 4) described a few of the benefits of working in a traditional office. Harrison in couple 2 mentioned that, when he worked from the traditional office, he socialized more and had more cues to take breaks. Colleen (couple 3) reminisced on going for walks with colleagues:

At the office, it was easier to get up and move around rather than just kind of pluck myself in the chair and get up 3 hours later, right? It was because there was always somebody to go talk to, or we would walk down to the coffee shop.



Couple 4 described appreciating the one day per week that one of them is required to be physically at work, which gives them a break from each other.

**Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Telework.** Some participants started teleworking due to the COVID-19 pandemic: both people in couple 1 shifted to teleworking at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic; Colleen in couple 3 and Ayla in couple 5 also began teleworking at that time. In addition, Harrison (couple 2) started teleworking just prior to the COVID-19 pandemic due to reasons related to his health and stress levels. In her individual interview, Lindsay discussed how the COVID-19 pandemic normalized teleworking for Harrison:

I think there's just been a shift in terms of being more open to different ways of doing things. And yeah, the idea that that's okay which I'm sure is a theme of the COVID pandemic for a lot of people. Just kind of questioning what the standards are that have been laid out for us, and how important it is to adhere to those, if things are still getting done and getting done well.... I'm noticing that he's just happier these days than he was 3 years ago. And that figuring out these ways of doing things and getting to a point where he's like working a job that he likes, and working it in a way that is comfortable for him that he's just more happier and how that's been great for both of us.

**Physical Space for Telework.** All five couples who participated in the study had arranged the physical space in their homes to facilitate telework, although the actual arrangements varied from couple to couple. In terms of the intersection of gender and the allocation of physical space, two couples lived in a home where both people had private offices, two couples lived in a home where the man was allocated the only private office, and one couple lived in a home where the woman was allocated the only private office. Clementine and Vernon

(couple 1) worked in separate areas of the apartment. However, Vernon had a private home office; whereas, Clementine worked from the living room. Clementine found it distracting to work in the living room:

I think the one thing with now being out in the living room, because I'm so close to "distractables" like the TV and video games, that it's easy for me to not be in the mood and jump out of it. So, I think one kind of bad thing about working from home is at least if you're in the office you're kind of forced to focus on work.

In Couple 2, Harrison put up sound dampening curtains in his private office to minimize distractions. However, his partner Lindsay completed schoolwork in their living room since they only had one spare room. Lindsay chose not to use sound dampening curtains in her living room office.

In contrast, couples 3 and 5 were able to set-up private offices for each member of the couple. Additionally, couple 3 closed their office doors while working and worked on separate floors of the home. With teleworking in mind, couple 5 intentionally moved into a home with two spare rooms to use as private offices. Ayla states that this has made a positive difference for their work-life wellness:

I think for me specifically, I cannot see clients with someone else in the room, I need to have a secure space. But even for [Barry], the office is a sanctuary, right? Like he has a space to go to where he is undisturbed to do his work, and I think if we both didn't have that, it would be a disaster.

Like couple 3, couple 4 worked on separate floors of their home; however, Thomas worked in the living room. Although the couple did not explain this decision in detail, they did

state that Monica's work requires more privacy. Nonetheless, Monica expressed concern about not interrupting Thomas' work, and felt constrained to remain upstairs when he was working.

**Overcoming Past Teleworking Obstacles.** This theme reflected the idea that three of the teleworking couples required initial adjustments, but they perceived themselves as having come a long way (couples 2, 3, and 5). Couple 2 reflected on the obstacles they have overcome since starting to telework, including building a better office space and Lindsay becoming more understanding of Harrison's telework. In couple 3, Colleen and William had to get used to both of them teleworking and have developed a homeostasis over time:

Colleen: I think we've adjusted for very well to both of us being home. That was a bit of an adjustment for you at first.

William: Yeah, it was a big adjustment.

Colleen: How so?

William: My space got invaded.

Colleen: Yes, it did.

William: And then I suddenly had somebody hollering down the stairs for me. Can you do this for me? Can you let out the dog? So, I had a lot more demands that were pulling me away from my stuff. But we've worked our way around that.

Colleen: And how did we...?

William: I've just learned to ignore you when you call me.

Colleen: No, well, we set up little rules like if you're office doors closed, I know that you're in a meeting, or that's your focus time. And so, I respect that, and you do the same, especially when I'm teaching.

Furthermore, Barry in couple 5 expressed happiness with how far they have come as a couple with adapting their lives and finding balance while teleworking. Specifically, couple 5 had adjusted their routines and preferences for leisure time to accommodate each other and, as explained previously, these adaptations also included choosing to live in a house that could accommodate both of them teleworking.

### **Summary of Findings**

Teleworking couples in this study had many approaches to cultivating work-life wellness. There were a variety of individualized projects and one project category that emerged as common across the couples. This category related to managing and adapting telework to meet individual and relationship needs. During the joint conversation portion of the research interview, participants (1) used humour to lighten serious conversational topics, (2) exhibited non-verbal signs of connection, (3) openly expressed perspectives, experiences, and needs, and (4) collaborated and worked as a team. Outside of the interview, participants reported (1) engaging in actions that reflected respect for boundaries, (2) having telework impact how they interact, (3) engaging in physical activity and exercise, and (4) having ongoing open conversations to resolve telework issues. Additionally, the research team noted the following themes as being prominent across the sample as a whole: (1) the role of pets, (2) teleworking and flexibility, (3) benefits of working in a traditional office, (4) impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on telework, (5) physical space for telework, and (6) overcoming past teleworking obstacles. These findings connect to the existing literature in numerous ways, which I describe in chapter 5.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion**

Using A-PM for this thesis research, I led a research team that explored the overall question of how teleworking couples construct and cultivate work-life wellness together. In alignment with the method, the sub-questions for this study were: (1) "What are the work-life wellness projects of teleworking couples?" and (2) "What actions do these couples take together to pursue their work-life wellness?" I found one overall category of joint projects related to the topic, eight common types of actions, and six additional themes that shed light on couples' experiences with this phenomenon. In this chapter, I relate these findings to existing literature and review strengths and limitations of the study. I will also outline directions for future research and provide suggestions for counselling practice.

### **Connections to Existing Research**

#### ***Joint Projects***

Couples in this study were found to be engaged in a variety of projects related to their work-life wellness, which reflected the diversity of their life experiences and contexts. As explained in Chapter 2, there is limited existing research about the processes that teleworking couples engage in to manage their work and life together. One exception is Delanoeijs and Verbruggen's (2019) study of 381 employees of a Belgian university about their home-work conflict and volition to use specific telework strategies. The researchers found that work-to-home conflicts were lower for teleworkers with higher congruences between their preferences and situation. Teleworking couples in our study seemed to have moderate alignment between their situations and their preferences. Thus, there seemed to be low to no work-to-home conflict in the couples in our study. For example, Harrison in couple 2 had designed a private office that

matched his needs. Work-home conflict for Harrison and Lindsay was minimal and mostly centered around disruptions from their dog (a home-to-work conflict). In contrast, couple 4 seemed to experience the most work-to-home conflict since they were in the process of figuring out how to make teleworking more comfortable for Monica. Overall, couples in this study displayed more nuanced relations between work-home conflict and congruence between their preferences and situations than couples in Delanoeije and Verbruggen's study.

Although it was not focused on telework, Domene and colleagues' A-PM study on young adult couples transitioning into the labour market found that couples pursued a variety of joint projects, such as: "(1) pursuing future occupational and educational plans, (2) balancing multiple priorities, (3) deciding where to live, (4) progressing in the relationship, and (5) joining lives together" (p. 17, Domene et al., 2012). In the present study, although the specific nature of the projects were different because the focus of the study was different, couples also had a multitude of projects with the goal to improve their work-life wellness. For example, it made sense for couple 2 to focus on their dog because their dog was their main source of disruptions during the workday. Similarly, couple 3 was composed of two people who were in their 60s, so "overhauling financial portfolio to ensure retirement" was a project that was meaningful for their work-life wellness.

Despite the fact that the projects in this study were primarily characterised by diverse goals, one common pattern was identified in the cross-case analysis: all couples were engaged in at least one project related to managing and adapting telework to meet their individual and relationship needs. This makes sense given the voluntary nature of participation and the fact that the recruitment email stated, "we are a team of researchers from the University of Calgary who are studying teleworking couples collaborating to build their work-life wellness" (see Appendix

A). It is possible that the couples in this study chose to participate in part because they perceived themselves as being engaged in projects that connected their telework to their wellness needs. Nonetheless, this study confirms that working together as a couple to manage/adapt their telework to meet their needs is a meaningful goal for at least some teleworkers in domestic partnerships. Connecting this finding to the existing literature, Biron and colleagues (2023) created a process model of need satisfaction in teleworkers, which included the concepts of crafting identities, boundaries, and networks. Furthermore, Karjalainen (2023) analyzed data from 2 surveys of Finnish teleworkers (2020: 87 teleworkers, 2021: 94 teleworkers), and found that teleworkers struggled to adapt to the increased interaction between home and work. Consistent with these studies, the couples in our study collaborated to address shifting environments, time and space boundaries, and their relationships with each other.

### *Actions*

**Using Humour and Non-verbal Signs of Connection.** Some of the couples in our study used humour to diffuse tension and increase friendliness during their joint conversations. Most couples in our study also tended to maintain closeness through sitting in physical proximity to each other and maintaining eye contact during their joint conversation. Previous research sheds light on the potential function of these conversational actions. Alberts and colleagues (2005) surveyed and recorded 10 satisfied American couples (couples in their study were pre-screened on self-reports of overall relationship satisfaction) over one week to determine the main characteristics of their conversations with each other. The researchers found that couples used humour 3% of the time and mainly on weekends (conflict was also more frequent on weekends), likely as way to provide each other with comic relief and support. Additionally, in Domene and colleagues' (2012) study on young adult couples in Canada, they found that humour was a part

of the way partners provided support to each other. Furthermore, Kuhn and colleagues (2017) observed 127 German couples reuniting following exposing one member of the couple to stress, and they found that non-verbal communication was an important aspect of dyadic coping. The researchers also stated that non-verbal dyadic coping was more likely to be used when one partner expressed high stress in an emotional way. The previous studies suggest that actions such as using humor and connecting through non-verbal gestures, which were observed in the present study, may be an important way in which couples support each other in conversations about work-life wellness, particularly at times when they are in disagreement or are distressed about the topic.

**Collaboration, Openly Expressing, and Ongoing Open Conversation.** All couples in the present study interacted collaboratively and shared their perspectives, experiences, and needs openly with each other during their joint conversation. Most of the participants also reported engaging in ongoing conversations to resolve issues that arose related to telework and work-life wellness. These patterns of action align with some existing research about communication in couples. Lavner and colleagues (2016) interviewed around 431 American newlywed couples and found that positive and effective communication is associated with marital satisfaction. Wilson and colleagues (2022) analyzed interviews of 43 American married couples for collaborative (“we”) language and found that couples who used more we-talk during conflicts had lower levels of hostility and were closer as a couple. Furthermore, Kuhn and colleagues’ (2017) study of German couples also found that couples would use problem-oriented coping to problem-oriented stress expressions. Together, these studies suggest that the collaboration, open expression, and practice of having ongoing conversations that I observed may have facilitated these participants’ pursuit of their projects and maintaining their mutual relationship. Therefore, they may be



important patterns of action to attend to in understanding teleworking couples' work-life wellness.

**Actions that Reflect Respect for Boundaries.** Most couples in this study acted in ways that reflected respect for each other's work boundaries. Research about the connections between boundary-setting and couples' work-life wellness outside of the context of teleworking indicates that couples' individual boundary setting preferences interact as well as form relational boundary styles (Beckman & Stanko, 2020; Wan et al., 2022). In an American study, Beckman and Stanko (2020) interviewed 29 couples with one partner in the United States Navy. The researchers organized couples based on their relational boundary management into categories involving adjustability (modification of shared roles) and cohesion (togetherness). Extreme adjustability resulted in unpredictable or rigid shared roles. Extreme cohesion in couples presented as high enmeshment (e.g., constant communication) or high individuation (e.g., completely focused on work during the day). Balanced couples displayed moderate levels of adjustment and cohesion. In my study, teleworking couples showed varying levels of adjustability and cohesion. For example, in couple 1, Clementine and Vernon interacted throughout the workday (high cohesion). Although couple 4 maintained separation throughout the workday by working on separate floors (low cohesion), they may have moderate cohesion due to their joint discussion of Monica's comfort in the home. For adjustability, couple 3 showed low adjustability since Colleen's work did not provide flexibility for her to help with domestic chores (such as walking the dog) during the workday. However, William had more flexibility than Colleen and was able to run errands during the workday (moderate adjustability).

Furthermore, Wan and colleagues (2022) surveyed 161 dual-earner couples in China about their segmentation preferences and work-family conflict. The researchers found that

women in the study experienced lower levels of work-family conflict when they and their partners also had a preference to separate home from work. The researchers attributed their findings to the gender socialization of women in China to be primarily responsible for the home domain, as greater separation of work and home for their husbands may result in husbands being more available for domestic labour. Wan and colleagues also suggested that individual preferences for work and home separation interact at the couple level with a particular influence on work-family conflict for women in couples. In my study, the teleworking couples showed a variety of preferences for work-home separation within individuals and between couples. For an example of within individual variation, Clementine (couple 1) enjoyed watching TV during work and eating lunches with Vernon (suggesting a preference for integrating work and personal life). However, she also found working in the living room to be distracting (suggesting a preference for work-home separation). Since Vernon also enjoyed eating lunches with Clementine and chatting with her throughout the workday, couple 1 as a whole likely preferred less work-home separation. Whereas in couple 5, Barry preferred a set work routine and schedule while Ayla preferred a flexible schedule; thus, as a whole, couple 5 likely has a moderate preference for work-home separation. Overall, teleworking couples in my study exhibited a variety of approaches to boundary setting within the couple. Work-life wellness for this sample also seemed moderate to high, with relatively little conflict observed or reported for the couples. Therefore, the results of my study suggest the relationship between work-home separation and work-family conflict may depend on the preferences and dynamics of the individuals within the couple and the couple as a whole.

As explained in chapter 2, Delanoeyje and colleagues (2019) found teleworkers found an inverse relationship between making role transitions during the workday and work-home conflict

in a sample of teleworkers from Belgium. As described in the previous paragraph, teleworkers in my study had varying levels of work-home segmentation with overall moderate to high levels of work-life wellness. Therefore, I think that the impact of role transitions on work-home conflict may depend on the couple.

Additionally, Vittersø and colleagues (2003) surveyed around 217 workers and 112 partners on quality of life, flexibility, control, and concentration. They found that a person's life satisfaction decreased in relation to the intensity of their partner's teleworking. One explanation for decreased partner satisfaction was that unclear work boundaries caused confusion for partners on when their teleworking partner is available. Vittersø and colleagues provided examples of teleworkers communicating their boundaries directly to family members and having private offices. In terms of poor boundaries, one partner in their study expressed frustration with their partner working during their together time. Similarly, in my study, Clementine (couple 1) showed concern for Vernon overworking and not getting appropriately compensated. Additionally, Lindsay (couple 2) and William (couple 3) both needed a period of adjustment to get used to their partners being at home all of the time. Overall, couples in my study used many different boundary setting strategies, involving both individual and joint actions, that were in line with those presented in the literature.

**Engaging in Physical Activity and Exercise Together.** In our study, some couples described exercising as a couple. Niu and colleagues (2021) surveyed around 5200 Japanese workers during the COVID-19 pandemic and found that exercise levels were around the same for those who worked at the office versus at home. However, some couples in our study noticed that they moved less than they used to when they worked from the office. Therefore, the couples in our study prioritized movement and activity in their conversations and made plans to exercise

with their partners. Clayton and colleagues (2017) randomly assigned 46 employed American women to an exercise group or control group and found that women in the exercise group experienced less strain between work and home. The researchers suggest that the decrease in strain they observed may be due to higher self-efficacy and decreased stress due to the exercise. Couples in the present study seemed to have moderate to high work-life wellness and this could be related to their commitment to exercising together. Unfortunately, there is a lack of research in the area of the effects of joint exercise on work-life wellness for couples to support my findings.

### *Additional Themes*

In addition to the findings addressing the specific research questions of this study, the exploratory nature of the analysis process in A-PM let to the research team identifying several other themes that appeared to be important in understanding participants' experiences of work-life wellness in the context of telework. Each of these additional themes will be briefly discussed in relation to existing literature. However, the most important conclusion that can be made about these themes is that they may be important to explore in a more systematic way in future research about telework and couples' work-life wellness.

**The Role of Pets.** In our study, pets appear to be an important consideration the couples' management of their work-life wellness while teleworking. Junça-Silva (2023) developed a scale to measure teleworking and the human-animal bond and found that the scale was significantly correlated with measures of job performance, health, and positive affect. In our study, couples showed signs of positive relationships with their pets including petting and playing with their pets. Couples also talked about their pets during the conversation with concerns for their care and well-being. It is likely that future research designed from the ground up to explore the role of

pets in teleworking couples' lives would shed more light on how and why these animals contribute to work-life wellness.

**Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Telework.** Some participants in our study started teleworking due to the COVID-19 pandemic, whereas others started teleworking for different reasons. As mentioned in the introduction, teleworking in Canada increased from around 5% to 40% due to mandated working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic (Statistics Canada, 2021a). According to a survey conducted in Spring 2022 by Environics Institute for Survey Research and other organizations after the lifting of government mandates, teleworking remains a popular option in Canada with around 50% of Canadian employees teleworking for at least part of the workweek (Environics Institute for Survey Research et al., 2022). Asgari and colleagues (2023) surveyed around 1000 Americans on their telework preferences in May 2020, and found that personal preferences determined telework frequency including a positive attitude toward technology and online learning. For the present study, data were collected from November, 2022 to March, 2023, which was after many provincial and federal work-from-home mandates had been lifted in Canada. Therefore, just like in the broader Canadian population, the couples who participated in this study appear to be individuals who have chosen to telework rather than being required to do so by government mandates. The reasons behind their choice may be connected to two additional themes that were identified in the study: teleworking and flexibility, and the benefits of working in a traditional office.

**Teleworking and Flexibility.** In our study, teleworking appeared to contribute to couples' work-life wellness by providing them with more flexibility. Sousa-Uva and colleagues (2021) surveyed around 1000 teleworkers in Portugal during the COVID-19 pandemic and found that work flexibility (including control over work and hours) was associated with work

satisfaction. In our study, all couples enjoyed at least one facet of work flexibility, such as flexibility of schedules, attire, tasks, and location. However, the theme of flexibility needs to be understood in light of the next theme that I will discuss.

**Benefits of Working in a Traditional Office.** Some of the couples in our study described becoming more aware of the benefits of working in a traditional office once they began teleworking. Powers (2014) surveyed around 500 government employees in the United States of America who teleworked at least 2 days per week. Powers reported that employees had greater positive affect on telework days compared to office days. However, participants in their study highly valued in-person socializing with co-workers on office days. Couples in our study described some factors that they value about going into the office, such as socialization with co-workers, cues to take breaks, and time away from their partner. Despite their acknowledgement of these benefits, none of the participants expressed an intention to return to the traditional office. This suggests that the flexibility provided by teleworking trumps the benefits of working in a traditional office for these couples and, potentially, others who continue to telework even after COVID-19 pandemic restrictions have been lifted.

**Physical Space for Telework.** Couples in this study negotiated physical space in the home for teleworking. In Canada, employees who started teleworking due to the COVID-19 pandemic are more likely to live in urban centres and thus live in apartments (Haider & Anwar, 2023). Haider and Anwar also concluded that larger dwellings are more helpful for teleworking due to needing space to work. Chauhan's (2022) study of teleworking couples in India also found that couples struggled to fairly allocate space in the home for work. Three out of the five couples in our study lived in houses rather than apartments and, as a result, enjoyed the associated physical separation from each other and decreased distractions. Although it was not possible to

do so in the present study due to the limited sample size, this theme suggests that it may be important to consider the influence of different kinds of housing and the available physical space in order to fully understand teleworkers' work-life wellness.

In summary, the present study has many findings that connect to existing telework and couple research. The categories of projects and actions as well as the additional themes that were identified in the study tied into discussions around couples managing telework to meet needs, conversing in relational ways, setting boundaries, and exercising together. In the following section, I will describe some of the strengths and limitations of the study and research method.

## **Strengths and Limitations**

### ***Strengths***

As a research method, A-PM has many strengths, including observing couples in real time, grounding the interview in context, and analyzing the data using a consensus-based approach (Warner, 2022; Young et al., 2005). The methodological integrity procedures and the knowledge of the research team that I outlined in Chapter 3 are also strengths of this study. Another strength of the study is the variability in the sample in terms of length of relationship and amount of experience with teleworking. The length of relationship varied, ranging from being married for 40 years (couple 3) to living together for 1 year (couple 5). This variability likely contributed to the wide range of projects and actions that were present in the findings, such as having a retirement planning project (couple 3) and intentionally choosing a home with two offices when moving in together (couple 5). Due to the variation in relationship length, I was also able to observe the candidness of couples that have been together longer and the initial negotiation stages of couples who were earlier in their relationship.

The sample also varied in terms of amount of teleworking experience, which ranged from one participant who had no teleworking experience to another participant who had been teleworking for 10 years. The range of teleworking experience may have contributed to differences in boundary setting, flexibility, and physical workspace in the home between couples. For example, William (couple 3) had been teleworking for around 10 years and had a private office set-up in the home along with expectations for limited distractions from others during his workday. William also described having the flexibility to run errands during his workday. On the other hand, Lindsay (couple 2), had no experience with paid telework, and she completed her schoolwork from the living room and focused more on boundaries for her partner, Harrison, than boundaries for herself. Lindsay also did not discuss how completing schoolwork from home supported flexibility for her schedule, location, or attire. Even though the couples varied in some important ways, in the limitations section I review aspects in which this sample lacked diversity.

### *Limitations*

This study was conducted using the condensed version of A-PM, which removed the opportunity to follow couple's projects over time (Warner, 2022; Young et al., 2021). Therefore, the findings provide only a snapshot into the work-life wellness of participants. Without the full version of A-PM, I was not able to explore how couples pursued their projects over time, and whether or not the couples' actions were connected to subsequent improvements in their work-life wellness. Another limitation is that the interviews were conducted in between November and March, which are times of the year in Canada when it is usually cold outside. Due to the weather restricting their ability to spend time outdoors, participants may have experienced lower levels of work-life wellness than if I had conducted the study in the summer.



A core component of this method involves observing participants have a conversation (Young et al., 2021). Unfortunately, couples 4 and 5 stated that their video-recorded joint conversation was not typical of how they usually interact. For couple 4, they acknowledged discomfort with being recorded and felt that they were both less engaged in the conversation due to being tired. In contrast, one member of couple 5 (Barry) was more engaged than he usually is in conversations because he felt uncomfortable with having silences in the recording. The atypical nature of the joint conversation calls into question the within-case description of actions for these two couples.

One couple declined to return for the member checking interview, which made it necessary to conduct the review of narratives over email instead of through a discussion. It is possible that this couple would have suggested additional changes to the narrative description documents if they had participated in the member checking interview. Furthermore, the length of time between main interviews and member checks in this study exceeded the recommendations made by Young and colleagues (2021). The fact that many member checking interviews were conducted several months after the main interview made it more difficult for couples to remember details from the main interviews, which may have negatively affected this methodological integrity procedure for all participants.

Although I attempted to use purposive sampling, difficulties with recruitment narrowed the pool of participants to select from and, in the end, I accepted everyone who met the inclusion criteria into the study. As a result, the sample contained four women who were counsellors, registered provisional psychologists, or counselling psychology students. Counsellors and counselling psychologists are trained to have a deep understanding of emotions and have genuine conversations with others. Therefore, the women in the sample may have built safe spaces for

conversations that may not exist for couples where neither person is a counsellor or counselling psychologist. Additionally, three of the women were graduate students. Graduate students can often feel like work-life wellness is just out of reach and feel guilty for prioritizing personal life over their schoolwork (Warner, 2022). Furthermore, there were a limited number of professions represented within the sample, with the women in healthcare and the men in information technology, science, and the petrochemical and energy management sectors. It is possible that teleworking couples working in other sectors (e.g., education, business, media) may pursue different kinds of work-life wellness projects or engage in different patterns of joint action with each other around their projects. Another downside of the low recruitment was that participant cultural backgrounds were mostly European or English Canadian. For this reason, cultural differences in work-life wellness are not adequately reflected in this study.

Additionally, due to low recruitment through intermediaries, I recruited all couples through my personal and professional networks. Consequently, couples may have altered the content that they shared during their interviews from what they would have shared if I was a researcher who was unfamiliar to them. For example, one couple from my extended professional network shared less with me than the couples who knew me better. However, it is possible that couples that I was closer to refrained from sharing personal details due to social desirability bias.

All couples in this study also had successfully navigated at least part of the COVID-19 pandemic together. Therefore, their experiences may be different from teleworking couples who were not successfully able to manage their work-life wellness during the COVID-19 pandemic, and who experienced increased conflict, separated, or divorced during that time. Divorce rates during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic (2020) decreased due more barriers for accessing the court system during the pandemic and possible prioritization of stability in the

home (Frew, 2022; Statistics Canada, 2023). Nonetheless, it must be recognized that the actions and projects that were revealed in the present study may primarily represent the experiences of couples that remained intact through COVID-related transitions to working from home.

### **Future Directions for Research**

As I explained in the Limitations section, the full A-PM protocol, with its longitudinal data collection and monitoring of projects over time, could be helpful to explore teleworkers' experiences more deeply. As stated above, this sample included only heterosexual couples. Due to the lack of literature pertaining to 2SLGBTQ+ teleworking couples, future studies should attempt to include diverse partnerships through purposive sampling and other recruitment strategies. There also seems to be limited existing research on the impacts of exercise on the work-life wellness of teleworking couples. A qualitative study on exercise in teleworking couples could set the stage for further research.

Researchers may also consider conducting quantitative studies to explore the relationship between various factors that were found in this study (e.g., flexibility, open conversations) and work-life wellness for teleworking couples. Due to the distinct characteristics of the couple dynamic, the factors that influence work-life wellness in a couple may differ from those connected to individual work-life wellness, such as overworking, boundaries, and caregiver status (Andrade & Petiz Lousã, 2021; Chung & Van der Lippe, 2020; Como & Domene, 2022; Schur et al., 2020; Vanderstukken et al., 2021). For example, the impact of overworking in couple 1 may have been minimized due to their connectedness throughout the workday.

The role of pets also stood out as a potentially important factor in work-life wellness. On one hand, pets can improve work-life wellness by facilitating calmness and promoting exercise and play. On the other hand, pets can increase personal responsibilities that can interfere with

energy and time for work. A comparison study between teleworking couples with and without pets could provide more information on the nuanced relationship of pets in the home and work-life wellness.

In the spirit of social justice, I would like to conduct further research on the experiences of women in teleworking couples in response to the wage gap and unequal distribution of household labour. To pursue this future research direction, it may be beneficial to use qualitative research methods that foreground the women's individual experiences within the couple, rather than a method that focuses on couples' joint actions and projects. For my doctoral research, I plan to use Enhanced Critical Incident Technique to explore what women perceive to be helpful and hindering to their work-life wellness. I will also explore their perceptions of what has been missing from their experiences that they believe would have been beneficial for promoting their work-life wellness.

In the following section on implications and applications, I provide a few ideas on how employers and policy makers can better support teleworking couples. In terms of future research, program evaluation studies could be used to determine the efficacy of some of these techniques. Results could be used to improve programs for teleworking couples for maximum impact on work-life wellness.

### **Implications and Applications**

In this section of the chapter, I provide suggestions for employers, practitioners, policy makers, and teleworkers based on the findings of my study. A-PM studies are not intended to produce generalizable results, so it is necessary to consider the individual characteristics and intersectionality of a teleworker before applying these strategies with them (Warner, 2022).

### *Suggestions for Employers*

Employers may benefit from considering how to support the work-life wellness of teleworkers in their organizations. In this study, I found that couples had varied approaches in cultivating work-life wellness. Therefore, leaders should not take a one-size fits all approach to supporting teleworkers and instead consider each employee's distinct needs (Como et al., 2021). Employers can take time to get to know employees in a casual, unobtrusive way, while respecting what they are willing to share. Additionally, employers may consider disclosing about their own life and work as well to show vulnerability and facilitate a sharing atmosphere. Leaders who show interest in their employees lives outside of work can increase the work-life wellness of employees (Yao et al, 2021). Employers will also need to be prepared to refer employees to affordable counselling resources to help with mental health issues and other concerns that they are unable to address.

In this study, we found that all 5 couples valued flexibility in their work. Teleworkers may feel more comfortable to prioritize their work-life wellness if flexibility is embedded into the culture of the organization. For example, leaders may consider leaving promptly at the end of the day and encouraging others to do the same instead of staying late at work or showing a casual attitude towards interruptions of online meetings by children and pets. Furthermore, leaders may consider reviewing policies that may stifle flexibility and trust employees to find flexibility in teleworking that works for their well-being.

Another finding was around physical space for working in the home. Employers may use these findings to educate employees who are in couples about what may be beneficial for establishing a physical space that facilitates work-life wellness. For example, some couples in the study utilized private spaces for both members of the couple, which required houses with

more rooms. Additionally, some couples used fans and curtains to control noise and privacy. Employers can reflect on how current compensation impacts financial flexibility to renovate spaces or move into larger dwellings. Supporting healthy work environments may improve work-life wellness for employees and boost productivity (Nemțeanu & Dabija, 2023).

### *Advice for Practitioners and Policy Makers*

**Practitioners.** A central implication of this study is that it may be useful for career and counselling practitioners to initiate conversations with teleworking couples about their work-life wellness through asking about their teleworking situation. Specifically, practitioners may benefit from obtaining a thorough understanding of their clients' workspaces, distractions, boundaries, needs, and schedules. In light of the finding that all the teleworking couples in this study engaged in a variety of joint actions with each other to pursue work-life wellness projects, it may be beneficial to meet with both members of the couple for some sessions. Meeting with both members of the couple will provide a more comprehensive view of the situation than attending only to one partner's individual actions and will allow for opportunities to intervene on the system of action in the couple. To elaborate, CAT offers a career counselling approach which is focused on joint projects and actions, such as those I observed in the participants of this study. In CAT career counselling, the practitioner would identify the systems of action in the couple and focus on resolving problematic actions and projects (Domene & Young, 2019). For example, if the couple wants to maintain a clean home (project); however, only one member of the couple cleans the home (action) then a counsellor may need to focus on promoting joint actions to clean the home or to help the couple to negotiate a joint project that both members of the couple would find more equitable.

**Policymakers.** Policymakers may consider developing wellbeing programs and grants designed specifically to address the needs of teleworking couples. Based on our study, it may be important for policymakers to focus on the allocation of physical space in the home including guidelines on choosing or renovating a home for teleworking and how to negotiate for workspace in the home. Policymakers may also consider creating teleworking policies that promote respect for boundaries, retain the flexibility associated with teleworking, and encourage teleworking employees to engage in physical activity and exercise.

### *Strategies for Teleworking Couples*

Couples in this study focused on different aspects of their work-life wellness depending on their current situation. Teleworking couples may consider having an open conversation together about what factors related to work-life wellness are most important to them right now. I recommend for couples to show curiosity toward their partner's perspectives and experiences while relating to their own experiences. If the conversation becomes challenging, couples may try making light of the situation by making a joke (if it fits) and find ways to work as a team and address their problems together. Revisiting these work-life wellness conversations periodically, will help teleworking couples to keep the pulse on how they are managing work-life wellness while teleworking.

After getting a sense of their partner's boundaries and needs, teleworking couples can make sure to honour them as best as possible. Examples of teleworking boundaries include closed doors, quiet environments, and lack of interruptions. A partner's desire for boundaries during the workday might depend on neurodivergence, whether they have a private home office, and how long they have been teleworking (Härtel et al., 2023).

## Conclusion

In this study, I interviewed 5 teleworking couples about their work-life wellness using A-PM data collection protocols. In collaboration with a team of two other researchers, I found a variety of projects, actions, and themes related to how couples cultivate their work-life wellness together. For example, all couples in this study related to managing and adapting telework to meet their individual and relationship needs. Participants had open and honest conversations about their work-life wellness especially related to flexibility and workspace in the home. The within-case and cross-case findings fit with past literature on teleworkers, including the vastness of teleworking strategies and preferences and the need for workspace in the home (Chauhan, 2022; Delanoeije & Verbruggen, 2019; Haider & Anwar, 2023). The findings from this study also led to numerous practical suggestions for employers, practitioners, policy makers, and teleworking couples themselves. Despite the numerous findings and implications that emerged from this qualitative study, it is evident that there is still much to be explored about the intersection between couples, telework, and work-life wellness. Therefore, I hope my contribution to the scholarly literature will be a starting point for future research on this topic.



## References

- Alberts, J. K., Yoshimura, C. G., Rabby, M., & Loschiavo, R. (2005). Mapping the topography of couples' daily conversation. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 22(3), 299–322. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407505050941>
- Amstad, F. T., Meier, L. L., Fasel, U., Elfering, A., & Semmer, N. K. (2011). A meta-analysis of work-family conflict and various outcomes with a special emphasis on cross-domain versus matching-domain relations. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 16(2), 151–169. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0022170>
- Andrade, C., & Petiz Lousã, E. (2021). Telework and work–family conflict during covid-19 lockdown in Portugal: The influence of job-related factors. *Administrative Sciences*, 11(3), 103–117. <https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci11030103>
- Asgari, H., Gupta, R., & Jin, X. (2023). Impacts of COVID-19 on future preferences toward telework. *Transportation Research Record*, 2677(4), 611–628. <https://doi.org/10.1177/03611981221115078>
- Beckman, C. M., & Stanko, T. L. (2020). It takes three: Relational boundary work, resilience, and commitment among navy couples. *Academy of Management Journal*, 63(2), 411–439. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2017.0653>
- Beno, M. (2019). Home-based telework and the role of gender-results of a study in Austria. *CONF-IRM* (p. 12). <https://aisel.aisnet.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1000&context=confirm2019>
- Biron, M., Casper, W. J., & Raghuram, S. (2023). Crafting telework: A process model of need satisfaction to foster telework outcomes. *Personnel Review*, 52(3), 671–686. <https://doi.org/10.1108/PR-04-2021-0259>

- Blount, Y., & Gloet, M. (2017). *Anywhere working and the new era of telecommuting*. IGI Global.
- Brower, T. (2011). *Making it work: Corporate executive opinions on work-life support* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Michigan State University.
- Brower, T. (2014). *Bring work to life by bringing life to work*. Routledge.  
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315230511>
- Campbell, A. & Domene, J. F. (2022). *Zooming into qualitative research: Online adaptation of the action project method research design*. Unpublished manuscript. Werklund School of Education, University of Calgary.
- Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (2023, May 1). Tentative deal with PSAC estimated to cost Treasury Board about \$1.3B per year. *CBC News*.  
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/psac-agreement-reached-treasury-board-1.6819491>
- Champagne, E., Choinière, O., & Granja, A. D. (2023). Government of Canada's teleworking and hybrid policies in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. *Canadian Public Administration*, 66, 185-175. <https://doi.org/10.1111/capa.12520>
- Chauhan, P. (2022). “I Have No Room of My Own”: COVID-19 pandemic and work-from-home through a gender lens. *Gender Issues*, 39(4), 507–533. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12147-022-09302-0>
- Chung, H., & Van der Lippe, T. (2020). Flexible working, work–life balance, and gender equality: Introduction. *Social Indicators Research*, 151(2), 365–381.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-018-2025-x>

- Clayton, R. W., Thomas, C. H., Schaffer, B. S., Stratton, M., Garrison, E., & Mathews, L. G. (2017). Exercise and work-family conflict: A field experiment. *Journal of Managerial Psychology, 32*(3), 225–238. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JMP-08-2015-0324>
- Çoban, S. (2021). Gender and telework: Work and family experiences of teleworking professional, middle-class, married women with children during the Covid-19 pandemic in Turkey. *Gender, Work, and Organization, 29*, 241–255  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12684>
- Como, R. & Domene, J. F. (2022). Work-Life wellness scale: Initial test development in a sample of remote workers. *Asia Pacific Career Development Journal, 5*(1), 3-12.  
<https://asiapacificcda.org/page-1862449>
- Como, R., & Domene, J. F. (2023). An overview of work-life wellness for teleworking couples. *Canadian Journal of Career Development, 22*(1), 63-68.  
<https://doi.org/10.53379/cjcd.2023.360>
- Como, R., Hambley, L., & Domene, J. F. (2021). An exploration of work-life wellness and remote work during and beyond COVID-19. *Canadian Journal of Career Development, 20*(1), 46-56. Retrieved from <https://cjcd-rcdc.ceric.ca/index.php/cjcd/article/view/92>
- Conference Board of Canada. (2021). *Working through COVID-19: The next normal*.  
Conference Board of Canada. <https://www.conferenceboard.ca/e-library/abstract.aspx?did=11211>
- Cook, L. H., & Shinew, K. J. (2014). Leisure, work, and disability coping: “I mean, you always need that ‘in’ group.” *Leisure Sciences, 36*(5), 420-438.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01490400.2014.912167>

- Delanoeije, J., & Verbruggen, M. (2019). The use of work-home practices and work-home conflict: Examining the role of volition and perceived pressure in a multi-method study. *Frontiers in Psychology, 10*, 2362–2362. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02362>
- Delanoeije, J., Verbruggen, M., & Germeys, L. (2019). Boundary role transitions: A day-to-day approach to explain the effects of home-based telework on work-to-home conflict and home-to-work conflict. *Human Relations, 72*(12), 1843–1868. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726718823071>
- Domene, J. F., & Young, R. A. (2008). Expanding the action project method to encompass comparative analyses. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 7*(1), 54-80. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F160940690800700104>
- Domene, J. F., & Young, R. A. (2019). Career counselling using contextual action theory: Key concepts for practice. In N. Arthur, M. Neault, & M. McMahon (Eds.) *Career theories and models at work: Ideas for practice* (pp. 136 - 147). Ceric.
- Domene, J. F., Nee, J. J., Cavanaugh, A. K., McLelland, S., Stewart, B., Stephenson, M., Kauffmann, B., Tse, C.K., & Young, R. A. (2012). Young adult couples transitioning to work: The intersection of career and relationship. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 81*(1), 17-25. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2012.03.005>
- Duxbury, L., & Higgins, C. (2012). *Revisiting work-life issues in Canada: The 2012 national study on balancing work and caregiving in Canada* [Report One]. Sprott School of Business, Carleton University. <https://policycommons.net/artifacts/1212239/revisiting-work-life-issues-in-canada/1765343/>
- Environics Institute for Survey Research, Future Skills Centre, & The Diversity Institute. (2021, April 12). *Work at home or live at work: The complexities of new working arrangements*.

- Future Skills Centre. <https://fsc-ccf.ca/research/work-at-home-or-live-at-work-the-complexities-of-new-working-arrangements/>
- Environics Institute for Survey Research, Future Skills Centre, & The Diversity Institute. (2022, September 15). *The shift to remote work: How workers in Canada are adapting to working from home*. Future Skills Centre. <https://fsc-ccf.ca/research/the-shift-to-remote-work/>
- Fedakova, D., & Istonova, L. (2017). Slovak IT-employees and new ways of working: impact on work-family borders and work-family balance. *Ceskoslovenska Psychologie*, *61*(1), 68-83. <https://www.proquest.com/openview/dce6c3b8377c21ba05590a18fd3ef8ef/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=28548>
- Fortin, N. M., Bell, B., & Böhm, M. (2017). Top earnings inequality and the gender pay gap: Canada, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. *Labour Economics*, *47*, 107–123. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.labeco.2017.05.010>
- Frew, N. (2022, March 29). Alberta sees fewest divorces in over 40 years after COVID-19 hit, data shows. *CBC News*. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/alberta-divorce-covid-19-data-1.6398445>
- Gergen, K. J. (2011). The self as social construction. *Psychological Studies*, *56*(1), 108-116. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12646-011-0066-1>
- Gherardi, S. (2015). Authoring the female entrepreneur while talking the discourse of work–family life balance. *International Small Business Journal*, *33*(6), 649-666. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0266242614549780>
- Goldberg, A. E., McCormick, N., & Virginia, H. (2021). Parenting in a pandemic: Work–family arrangements, well-being, and intimate relationships among adoptive parents. *Family Relations*, *70*(1), 7-25. <https://doi.org/10.1111/fare.12528>

- Grant, C. A., Wallace, L. M., & Spurgeon, P. C. (2013). An exploration of the psychological factors affecting remote e-worker's job effectiveness, well-being and work-life balance. *Employee Relations*, 35(5), 527–546. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ER-08-2012-0059>
- Haar, J., Russo, M., Suñe, A., & Ollier-Malaterre, A. (2014). Outcomes of work–life balance on job satisfaction, life satisfaction and mental health: A study across seven cultures. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 85(3), 361-373. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2014.08.010>
- Haddock-Millar, & Eliot, T. (2020). *Coaching and mentoring for work-life balance*. Routledge.
- Haider, M., & Anwar, A. I. (2023). The prevalence of telework under Covid-19 in Canada. *Information Technology & People*, 36(1), 196-223. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ITP-08-2021-0585>
- Hambley, L. (Host). (2020, October 14). Why does it take a catastrophe to evolve the way we work and live? [Audio podcast episode]. In *Where Work Meets Life™ with Dr. Laura*. <https://drlaura.live/podcast/>
- Härtel, T. M., Hüttemann, D., & Müller, J. (2023). Associations between the implementation of telework strategies and job performance: Moderating influences of boundary management preferences and telework experience. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14, 1099138. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1099138>
- Hilbrecht, M., & Lero, D. S. (2014). Self-employment and family life: constructing work–life balance when you're 'always on.' *Community, Work & Family*, 17(1), 20–42. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13668803.2013.862214>
- Holloway, D. (2007). Gender, telework and the reconfiguration of the Australian family home. *Continuum*, 21(1), 33-44. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10304310601103919>

- Jamal, M. T., Anwar, I., Khan, N. A., & Ahmad, G. (2023). How do teleworkers escape burnout? A moderated-mediation model of the job demands and turnover intention. *International Journal of Manpower*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJM-12-2022-0628>
- Jensen, C., Hoben, M., Chamberlain, S. A., K. Marshall, S., Young, R. A., & Gruneir, A. (2022). Data analyses using the action project method coding technique: A guide. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 21(1), 1-7. <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069221108035>
- Junça-Silva, A. (2023). The telework pet scale: Development and psychometric properties. *Journal of Veterinary Behavior*, 63, 55–63. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jveb.2023.05.004>
- Karjalainen, M. (2023). Gender and the blurring boundaries of work in the era of telework—A longitudinal study. *Sociology Compass*, 17(1), 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.13029>
- Klaassen, D. W., Young, R. A., & James, S. (2014). Relational and spiritual dimensions of parental grieving. *Canadian Journal of Counselling and Psychotherapy*, 49(1), 79-95. <https://cjc-rcc.ucalgary.ca/article/view/61033>
- Kuhn, R., Milek, A., Meuwly, N., Bradbury, T. N., & Bodenmann, G. (2017). Zooming in: A microanalysis of couples' dyadic coping conversations after experimentally induced stress. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 31(8), 1063–1073. <https://doi.org/10.1037/fam0000354>
- Lavner, J. A., Karney, B. R., & Bradbury, T. N. (2016). Does couples' communication predict marital satisfaction, or does marital satisfaction predict communication? *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 78(3), 680–694. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12301>
- Lincoln, Y.S., & Guba, E. A. (2000). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging influences. In K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 163-189). Sage.

- Lunau, T., Bambra, C., Eikemo, T., Van der Wel, K., & Dragano, N. (2014). A balancing act? Work-life balance, health and well-being in European welfare states. *European Journal of Public Health, 24*(3), 422-427. <https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/cku010>
- Martinez-Amador, J. (2016). Remote and on-site knowledge worker productivity and engagement: a comparative study of the effect of virtual intensity and work location preference. (Electronic Thesis or Dissertation). Retrieved from <https://etd.ohiolink.edu/>
- Marowits, R. (2022, June 5). *Remote, hybrid work creating schism as popular option unavailable to many workers*. CP24. <https://www.cp24.com/news/remote-hybrid-work-creating-schism-as-popular-option-unavailable-to-many-workers-1.5933649>
- Mehdi, T., & Morissette, R. (2021, October 27). *Working from home in Canada: What have we learned so far?* Statistics Canada. <https://doi.org/10.25318/36280001202101000001-eng>
- Mergener, A., Entgelmeier, I., & Rinke, T. (2023). Does working from home improve the temporal alignment of work and private life? Differences between telework and informal overtime at home by gender and family responsibilities. In A-K. Abendroth & L. Lükemann (Eds.). *Flexible Work and the Family* (pp. 129-157). Emerald Publishing Limited. <https://doi.org/10.1108/s1530-353520230000021005>
- Nemțeanu, M.S., & Dabija, D.C. (2023). Negative impact of telework, job insecurity, and work-life conflict on employee behaviour. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 20*(5), 4182. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20054182>
- Nguyen, M.H., & Armoogum, J. (2021). Perception and preference for home-based telework in the COVID-19 era: a gender-based analysis in Hanoi, Vietnam. *Sustainability, 13*(6), 3179. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13063179>



- Niu, Q., Nagata, T., Fukutani, N., Tezuka, M., Shimoura, K., Nagai-Tanima, M., & Aoyama, T. (2021). Health effects of immediate telework introduction during the COVID-19 era in Japan: A cross-sectional study. *PloS One*, *16*(10), e0256530–. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0256530>
- Oakman, J., Kinsman, N., Graham, M., Stuckey, R., & Weale, V. (2022). Strategies to manage working from home during the pandemic: The employee experience. *Industrial Health*. <https://doi.org/10.2486/indhealth.2022-0042>
- Obioma, I. F., Jaga, A., Raina, M., Asekun, W. A., & Hernandez Bark, A. S. (2022). Gendered share of housework and the COVID-19 pandemic: Examining self-ratings and speculation of others in Germany, India, Nigeria, and South Africa. *Journal of Social Issues*, 1-28. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12507>
- Ojala, S., Nätti, J., & Anttila, T. (2014). Informal overtime at home instead of telework: Increase in negative work-family interface. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, *34*(1/2), 69–87. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSSP-03-2013-0037>
- Pelletier, R., Patterson, M., Centre for Labour Market Information, Statistics Canada, Moyser, M., & Centre for Gender, Diversity and Inclusion, Statistics Canada. (2019). *The gender wage gap in Canada: 1998 to 2018*. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-004-m/75-004-m2019004-eng.htm>
- Powers, B. V. (2014). *The effects of telework on well-being: Comparing well-being during telework and office work among federal cabinet-level employees in the national capital region*. Bellevue University. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

- Ryan, A. M., & Briggs, C. Q. (2019). Improving work-life policy and practice with an intersectionality lens. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion an International Journal*, 39(5), 533–547. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EDI-01-2019-0049>
- Schur, L. A., Ameri, M., & Kruse, D. (2020). Telework after COVID: a “silver lining” for workers with disabilities? *Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation*, 30, 521-536.
- Sousa-Uva, M., Sousa-Uva, A., e Sampayo, M. M., & Serranheira, F. (2021). Telework during the COVID-19 epidemic in Portugal and determinants of job satisfaction: A cross-sectional study. *BMC Public Health*, 21(1), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-021-12295-2>
- Statistics Canada. (2021a). *Working from home in Canada: What have we learned so far?* Statistics Canada. <https://doi.org/10.25318/36280001202101000001-eng>
- Statistics Canada. (2021b). *Study: Working from home: productivity and preferences*. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/210401/dq210401b-eng.htm>
- Statistics Canada. (2023). *A fifty-year look at divorces in Canada, 1970 to 2020*. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220309/dq220309a-eng.htm>
- Sullivan, C., & Lewis, S. (2001). Home-based telework, gender, and the synchronization of work and family: perspectives of teleworkers and their co-residents. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 8(2), 123-145. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0432.00125>
- Tarigan, J., Susanto, A. R. S., Hatane, S. E., Jie, F., & Foedjiawati, F. (2020). Corporate social responsibility, job pursuit intention, quality of work life and employee performance: case study from Indonesia controversial industry. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Business Administration*, 13(2), 141-158. <https://doi.org/10.1108/APJBA-09-2019-0189>
- Valach, L., Michel, K., Young, R. A., & Dey, P. (2002). Stories of attempted suicide: Suicide career, suicide project, and suicide action. In L. Valach, R. A. Young & M.J. Lynam

- (Eds.), *Action theory: A primer for applied research in the social sciences* (pp 173-198). Praeger.
- Vanderstukken, A., Nikolova, I., de Jong, J. P., & Ramioul, M. (2021). Exploring types of telecommuters: A latent class analysis approach. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology, 31*(2), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1359432X.2021.1952989>
- Vittersø, J., Akselsen, S., Evjemo, B., Julsrud, T. E., Yttri, B., & Bergvik, S. (2003). Impacts of home based telework on quality of life for employees and their partners. Quantitative and Qualitative Results From a European Survey. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 4*(2), 201-233. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1024490621548>
- Warner, L. (2022). *Career-Relationship intersections for emerging adult women in STEM: An action project method exploration* (Master's thesis, University of Calgary). PRISM. <http://hdl.handle.net/1880/114956>
- Wan, M., Shaffer, M. A., Dou, J., Zhang, M., & Zhang, Y. (2022). A dyadic approach to examining dual-earner couples' boundary segmentation preferences and work-family conflict. *International Journal of Stress Management, 29*(3), 292–305. <https://doi.org/10.1037/str0000262>
- Waters, K., Stoothoff, J., Gibraltar, J., & Thompson, G. (2016). The lived experience of teleworking: A case study from the higher education environment. *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*. <https://www.proquest.com/openview/4298820a29f6ae7a11005a9b5e7961ee/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750>
- Wilson, S. J., Jaremka, L. M., Fagundes, C. P., Andridge, R., & Kiecolt-Glaser, J. K. (2022). Does it matter whether we or I talk about us? Distinguishing we-talk in couples' conflict

- discussions and partners' private thoughts before and after conflict. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 39(4), 1066–1086. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02654075211051116>
- Yao L., Minya, X., & Pellegrini E.K. (2021). The boss's long arm: The differential impact of authoritarian and benevolent leadership on spousal family satisfaction. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12(1) 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.780030>
- Young, R. A., Ball, J., Valach, L., Turkel, H., & Wong, Y. S. (2003). The family career development project in Chinese Canadian families. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 62(2), 287-304. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0001-8791\(02\)00022-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0001-8791(02)00022-2)
- Young, R. A., Domene, J. F., & Valach, L. (Eds.) (2015). *Counseling and action: Toward life-enhancing work, relationships and identity*. Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4939-0773-1>
- Young, R. A., Domene, J. F., Valach, L., & Socholotiuk, K. (2021). Exploring human action in counseling psychology: The action-project research method. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 68(3), 331. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/cou0000533>
- Young, R. A., & Valach, L. (2004). The construction of career through goal-directed action. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 64(3), 499–514. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2003.12.012>
- Young, R. A., Valach, L., & Domene, J. F. (2005). The action-project method in counseling psychology. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 52(2), 215. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/0022-0167.52.2.215>
- Zhang, S., Moeckel, R., Moreno, A. T., Shuai, B., & Gao, J. (2020). A work-life conflict perspective on telework. *Transportation Research. Part A, Policy and Practice*, 141, 51-68. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tra.2020.09.007>



## **Appendix A: Recruitment Email**

Subject: Looking for teleworking research participants

We are a team of researchers from the University of Calgary who are studying teleworking couples collaborating to build their work-life wellness. We hope to use our findings to help teleworking couples, and those who support them, to improve work-life wellness.

We are looking for participants who are couples (dating, common-law, or married) who have lived together for more than 1 year, where one or both partners telework full-time. Both members of the couple will need to participate in the study.

As compensation for the time involved, each participant will receive a \$25 Amazon.ca electronic gift card (\$50 per couple).

### **What will I be asked to do?**

Couples who are selected for the study will participate in a multi-part Zoom interview, which will include having a conversation with each other and being interviewed by the researcher. Couples will also be invited to have a shorter follow-up Zoom session to review the researchers' summary of the information that they provided in the main interview. Total participation time will be approximately 3 hours. Participation is completely voluntary, anonymous, and confidential.

**If you would like to find out more or want to volunteer for the study, please contact Rebecca Como at [rebecca.como1@ucalgary.ca](mailto:rebecca.como1@ucalgary.ca)**

Principal Investigator: Dr. José Domene, Werklund School of Education, [jfdomene@ucalgary.ca](mailto:jfdomene@ucalgary.ca)

The University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board has approved this research study: REB22-0864

## **Appendix B: List of Organizations and Groups**

- Canada Newcomers (Facebook)
- Canada Unbound - Freelance and Remote Work Community (Facebook)
- Canadian Association for Supported Employment
- Canadian Association of Forest Owners
- Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers
- Canadian Consumer Specialty Products Association
- Canadian Federation of Agriculture
- Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters
- Food Processors of Canada
- Remote Work Canada (Reddit)
- Retail Council of Canada
- Working from home moms' group (Facebook)

### Appendix C: Screening Interview Protocol

Thank you for your interest in my study on teleworking couples and their work-life wellness. Today, I am going to ask you some screening questions to help me determine if you are a fit for the study. Do you have any comments or questions for me before we begin?

1. Do you reside in Canada?
  - a. Yes
    - i. Which province?
  - b. No
2. What is your relationship status?
  - a. How long have you lived with your partner?
3. How many hours do you work per week (on average)? What percentage of those hours are teleworking?
4. What industry best describes your field of work?
  - a. Here are some examples (prompt):
    - Accounting
    - Banking
    - Customer Service
    - Education
    - Engineering
    - Government
    - Healthcare
    - Human Resources
    - Information Technology
    - Manufacturing
    - Sales
    - Transportation
    - Other, please describe:
5. What interests you about this study? (Optional)

As a reminder, both members of the couple need to participate. Can you please provide me with the email address of your partner?



## Appendix D: Informed Consent Form




---

### Name of Researcher, Faculty, Department, Telephone & Email:

Rebecca Como, Researcher, Werklund School of Education, [email redacted]

Lindsay Warner, Research Assistant, [email redacted]

### Supervisor & Principal Investigator:

Dr. José Domene, Werklund School of Education

### Title of Project:

Teleworking Couples Cultivating Work-Life Wellness: An Action-Project Method Study

---

This consent form is only part of the process of informed consent. If you want more details about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

The University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board has approved this research study: REB22-0864.

Participation is completely voluntary, anonymous, and confidential.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to understand the actions couples take to increase work-life wellness in their lives, as well as their work life wellness goals. It is being conducted for the researcher's master's thesis. We hope to use our findings to help teleworking couples, and those who support them, to improve work-life wellness.

### What Will I Be Asked To Do?

After getting comfortable with each other through a brief conversation, we will be asking you and your romantic partner to have a conversation with each other about your work-life wellness. Following the conversation, a researcher will review the content of that conversation with each of you individually. Finally, we will invite you to review our summary of the conversations for accuracy in a follow-up interview. Total participation will require about 3 hours of your time.

We will video- and audio-record the meetings with participants. Participation is completely voluntary. You may skip any questions you do not want to answer. You may stop your participation or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Note that, if one person withdraws before completing the

"couple's conversation" part of the study, it will not be possible for the other member of the couple to continue participating.

### **What Type of Personal Information Will Be Collected?**

Should you agree to participate, you will be asked to provide your gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, number of children at home, province, and educational level.

Only members of the research team will have access to the video and audio recordings and the recordings will never be played in public.

There are two options for you to consider if you decide to take part in this research. Please check one of the options below and provide a pseudonym if you choose the second option:

You may quote me and use my real name

OR

You may refer to me by a pseudonym. The pseudonym I choose for myself is:

### **Are there Risks or Benefits if I Participate?**

You may experience psychological discomfort discussing sensitive subjects such as gender inequality, finances, and mental health or disagreements that you may have with your partner. If you experience discomfort, you are encouraged to seek support using the provided resource list.

This research has the potential to reveal information that is required by law to be reported to a law enforcement or other agency. Specifically, we are legally obligated to report harm to children or elders, and potential immediate serious harm to yourself or others.

You and your partner will each receive a 25-dollar Amazon.ca gift card (i.e., 50 dollars per couple) following the completion of the main interview. The gift card will be sent via email.

### **What Happens to the Information I Provide?**

No one except the research team will have access to any of the information you provide. Each member of the research team will store the encrypted data on the hard drive of password protected computers. We will password protect all data and will refrain from making hard copies. We will store signed consent forms containing identifying information separately from transcripts. After the researcher (Rebecca Como) completes her thesis, she will erase all video recordings and emails. Only group information will be summarized for any presentation or publication of results. Five years after the end of the study, the researcher will permanently delete all aggregate demographic information, anonymized transcripts, signed consent forms, and data analysis documents.

You are free to withdraw until two weeks after your final interview. If you decide to withdraw, you also have the right to request that all data you previously contributed to the study to be removed.

Would you like to receive a summary of the study's results?

Yes: \_\_\_ No: \_\_\_

If yes, please provide your contact information (e-mail address, or phone number)

---

---

---

**Signatures**

Your signature on this form indicates that 1) you understand to your satisfaction the information provided to you about your participation in this research project, and 2) you agree to participate in the research project.

In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from this research project at any time. You should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Participant's Name: (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Name: (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Questions/Concerns**

If you have any further questions or want clarification regarding this research and/or your participation, please contact:

*Ms. Rebecca Como*  
*Werklund School of Education*  
*[email redacted]*

*Dr. José Domene*  
*Werklund School of Education*  
*[email redacted]*

If you have any concerns about the way you've been treated as a participant, please contact the Research Ethics Analyst, Research Services Office, University of Calgary at 403.220.6289 or 403.220.8640; email [cfreb@ucalgary.ca](mailto:cfreb@ucalgary.ca). A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference. The investigator has kept a copy of the consent form.

## Appendix E: Interview Protocol

### Main Interview

#### *Set-Up*

- Before interviewees arrive test all online technologies:
  - Recording
  - Sharing screen
- Ensure all documents are accessible to discuss with participants:
  - Consent form
  - Demographic form
  - 2 Amazon gift card links to be emailed at the end of the interview
- Start Zoom meeting

#### *Orientation and Confirming Consent*

- Say: “Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. As a reminder, we are studying how teleworking couples increase work-life wellness in their lives. We define work-life wellness as feeling well in your work and personal life, and (2) feeling well about how your work personal life interact.”
- Say: “Please close all other windows and applications on your computer to maintain our connection speed.”
- Explain what you will be doing in all 3 parts of today’s interview: “First, the three of us will talk together. Then, the two of you will have a 20-minute conversation with just each other. Finally, I will have a conversation with each of you individually as you reflect on your conversation that you had together.”
- Confirm consent and that the electronic copies are signed
- Ensure couple has your phone number

#### *Warm-up*

- Say: I am going to ask you a few questions to get to know you better and introduce you to the topic. Please answer as much as you are comfortable. I am going to start recording.
- Record
- Ask questions and use prompts as needed:

- Please tell me a bit about your teleworking situation?
  - When did you start?
  - How have you navigated being at home?
- If you had to pick one or two things related to work-life wellness are a priority for you as a couple at the moment, what would they be?
  - What work-life wellness goals have the two of you been working on together recently?
- Do you have any questions before we move on the next part of the study?
- Say: We want to observe how couples talk about improving their work-life wellness. So, in this next part of the study, I invite you to have a conversation about this, perhaps by focusing on [name some of the specific work-life wellness priorities and goals that they mentioned in the warm-up]. However, you are free to explore other topics as comes naturally. I encourage you to sit facing one another. I will come back in 20 minutes to guide us to the next part of the study. Please send me a text or call me if you finish before then. Do you have any questions for me before I leave?
- Stop researcher video
- Hide self-view
- Mute
- Start timer for 20 minutes

***Initiate Break***

- After 20-minute joint conversation:
  - Show self-view
  - Start video
  - Unmute
- “The video needs to be converted before viewing. So, we will take a 10-minute break. I will email you a new zoom link and then you will each do the conversation review portion individually with me. Who would like to go first? I will email the link to your personal email address.”
- Stop recording
- End zoom meeting

### Self-confrontation Meeting 1

- Compile video
- Email new zoom link
- Open Zoom meeting
- Record
- Share video window
- Explain: “We are going to review the conversation to get more information about your individual perspective. I will ask about your thoughts, feelings, and goals during the conversation. I will stop the video every 2 minutes to ask you questions. If something important comes up for you, you can ask me to stop the recording to tell me about it. Do you understand? Are you ready to start?”
- Play the video, stopping every 2 minutes: 2 minutes, 4 minutes, 6 minutes, 8 minutes, 10 minutes, 12 minutes, 14 minutes
  - Ask: “How were you feeling in that section?”
  - Ask: “What thoughts were going through your mind in that section?”
- At end of the recording ask:
  - “Overall, what were your goals; what were you trying to accomplish in the conversation with [name of partner]?”
  - “How typically was that conversation in terms of the way you two normally interact?”
  - “Is there anything else that would be useful for me to know about that conversation?”
  - “That is it, thank you! I will email you the link for the \$25 gift card to amazon today.”
  - “I will also be in touch in about 2 weeks to book the follow-up phone meeting after doing a preliminary analysis of your data. The phone call will be much shorter and will just be checking with you to see if we are on the right track with our analysis.”
- End recording
- Close zoom meeting

## Self-confrontation Meeting 2

- Email new zoom link
- Open Zoom meeting
- Record
- Share video window
- Explain: “We are going to review the conversation to get more information about your individual perspective. I will ask about your thoughts, feelings, and goals during the conversation. I will stop the video every 2 minutes to ask you questions. If something important comes up for you, you can ask me to stop the recording to tell me about it. Do you understand? Are you ready to start?”
- Play the video, stopping every 2 minutes: 2 minutes, 4 minutes, 6 minutes, 8 minutes, 10 minutes, 12 minutes, 14 minutes
  - Ask: “How were you feeling in that section?”
  - Ask: “What thoughts were going through your mind in that section?”
- At end of the recording ask:
  - “Overall, what were your goals; what were you trying to accomplish in the conversation with [name of partner]?”
  - “How typically was that conversation in terms of the way you two normally interact?”
  - “Is there anything else that would be useful for me to know about that conversation?”
  - “That is it, thank you! I will email you the link for the \$25 gift card to amazon today.”
  - “I will also be in touch in about 2 weeks to book the follow-up phone meeting after doing a preliminary analysis of your data. The phone call will be much shorter and will just be checking with you to see if we are on the right track with our analysis.”
- End recording
- Close zoom meeting

## **Member Checking Interview 1: Individual Narrative**

### ***Set-up***

- Ensure copy of the individual narrative is accessible to record changes on
- Ensure recording is working properly on zoom

### ***Introduction***

- Say: Thank you for meeting with me today. This interview is being recorded.
- Say: Today's interview will be much shorter than last time, and mainly to confirm our interpretation of what was going on for you in the first interview.

### ***Feedback***

- Say: In the last few weeks, we analyzed and summarized your self-confrontation session. We want to check with you to make sure we were on the right track and find out if what we said makes sense from your perspective. I am going to read out the narrative summary to you, and I want you to stop me at any time if you have questions, we got something wrong, or if you want any changes made. I would like you to tell me what it should say instead. Do you have any questions for me before we begin?
- Read the narrative, slowly, pausing at each paragraph (pausing after each sentence works well to get confirmation)
- Say after each paragraph: How does that fit with you?
- At the end of the entire narrative ask: Is there anything important that we missed?
- Make changes to the document, as requested by the participant
- Say: Thank you for your time. Do you have any questions for me before we wrap-up?

## **Member Checking Interview 2: Individual Narrative**

### ***Set-up***

- Ensure copy of the individual narrative is accessible to record changes on
- Ensure recording is working properly on zoom

### ***Introduction***

- Say: Thank you for meeting with me today. This interview is being recorded.
- Say: Today's interview will be much shorter than last time, and mainly to confirm our interpretation of what was going on for you in the first interview.



**Feedback**

- Say: In the last few weeks, we analyzed and summarized your self-confrontation session. We want to check with you to make sure we were on the right track and find out if what we said makes sense from your perspective. I am going to read out the narrative summary to you, and I want you to stop me at any time if you have questions, we got something wrong, or if you want any changes made. I would like you to tell me what it should say instead. Do you have any questions for me before we begin?
- Read the narrative, slowly, pausing at each paragraph (pausing after each sentence works well to get confirmation)
- Say after each paragraph: How does that fit with you?
- At the end of the entire narrative ask: Is there anything important that we missed?
- Make changes to the document, as requested by the participant
- Say: Thank you for your time. Do you have any questions for me before we wrap-up?

**Member Checking Interview 3: Joint Narrative**

- Ensure copy of the joint narrative is accessible to record changes on
- Ensure recording is working properly on zoom
- Say: As you probably remember, the point of this study is to figure out how couples are collaborating on their work-life wellness. So, for our research, we'd like to figure out what relationship-related goals, or decisions, or tasks you are focusing on as a couple right now. We call these things "projects." With that in mind, our tentative interpretation of the relationship project that we interpreted you both working on right now, based on the previous interview is: [*read summary of projects*]  
Is this off the mark in any way, or no longer an issue?
- If we need to find an alternative project:
  - Ask: So, what kinds of things do you see you both focusing on as a couple, in terms of your future relationship?
  - Explore the meaning of their response
  - Ask: And what kinds of specific actions could you do to work on that project?
  - Get concrete examples of the kinds of actions that could "count" as being project related. Make sure you ask for / suggest examples of actions other than

conversations. You can refer to the examples already written on the narrative summary.

- Once the project is confirmed or an alternative project is constructed:
  - Ask: What will be some signs that you successfully completed the project?
  - Get concrete examples of indicators of success including observable, behavioral indicators
- Say: Thank you for your time. Do you have any questions for me before we wrap-up?

## Appendix F: Demographic Questionnaire



### Demographic Questionnaire

*This form will take about 5 minutes to complete. We will use the answers from this form to summarize the demographic information of the participants. All questions on this form are optional. Please only answer questions that you feel comfortable answering. Returning this form is optional. The University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board has approved this research study: REB22-0864.*

*If you have any questions or comments, please contact Rebecca Como (Research Assistant) at [email redacted].*

1. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
  - a. Primary School
  - b. Secondary School
  - c. Trade/Technical Certification
  - d. CEGEP/College Diploma
  - e. Bachelor's Degree
  - f. Graduate Degree (e.g., Master's, Doctorate)
  
2. Where do you reside?  
Province or Territory: \_\_\_\_
  
3. How many children (under the age of 18) live with you? \_\_\_\_
  
4. What is your age? \_\_\_\_
  
5. How do you describe your gender identity?
  
6. How would you describe your sexual orientation?
  
7. Which categories best describe your ethnicity or cultural background? Please select all that apply.
  - a. African

- b. East Asian
- c. South Asian
- d. Southeast Asian
- e. Caribbean
- f. English Canadian
- g. French Canadian
- h. European
- i. Hispanic or Latinx
- j. Indigenous – First Nations
- k. Indigenous – Inuit
- l. Indigenous – Métis
- m. Indigenous – please specify:
- n. Middle Eastern
- o. Non of the above categories suits me, I identify as:
- p. Prefer not to answer

**Research Use Only**

Participant number:

Pseudonym:

## Appendix G: Code List

### Acknowledges

Minimal statements, that acknowledges the statement by the other

“Um-hmmm”

“Yes”

“Sure”

“OK”

### Advises

“I think the best idea for you is to get a job in the short term and then think about your educational concerns in the long-term.”

### Agrees

“Yes, I agree”

“That’s true”

“You’re right”

“I concur”

“We see eye to eye”.

### Ambiguous response

Response is unclear, not readily interpretable, has more than one possible meaning, hazy or fuzzy meaning.

### Answers question

### Apologizes

“Sorry, I apologize”

“Oops”

“My-bad”

### Approves

Positive evaluative or judging statement

“It’s a great idea that you’re \_\_\_\_\_”

Validates

“That’s fantastic”, “It’s good”, “It’s fine”)

### Asks for clarification (further explanation or expansion)

“Can you tell me more about that?”

“I’m wondering which of your dilemmas seems to have the most importance for you right now?”

“Can you give me more details about that situation?”

“Can you expand on that?”

### **Asks for confirmation**

“Am I getting this right?”

“Is that what you mean?”

“So, you’ll be here for next week’s appointment?”

### **Asks for feeling state**

“How do you feel about that?”

“What does it feel like when you \_\_\_\_\_?”

“Tell me more about that sadness”

### **Asks for information** (more factual in nature)

“When was it that you moved out of your parents’ home?”

### **Asks for justification or reasons**

“Why was that?”

“What was your rationale for making that choice?”

### **Asks for opinion or belief**

“What do you think about that?”

“What do you believe to be the most important aspect of becoming an adult?”

### **Asks for speculation or hypothetical scenario** (challenges)

“What if . . . ?”

“Let’s say \_\_\_\_\_ happened?”

“How do you think you would handle \_\_\_\_\_?”

### **Change of Topic/Conversation switch**

“But yeah...”

### **Clarifies**

Usually in response to asks for clarification. Involves giving more information to clear up an ambiguity or a misinterpretation.

### **Complains**

“My employer gives me every crappy shift. It ruins my weekend plans.”

### **Confirms**

Response to a request for further information

“So, you are coming for dinner tonight?”

**Continues other’s statement**

After an interruption

Continues own statement after a pause

**Demands**

Tells the other what to do

**Describes experience**

Describes perception of an event

**Describes future**

“My mother will be visiting next week.”

**Describes intention**

“That’s why I \_\_\_\_\_”

**Describes other** (in the annotation – describe who the “other” is)

“It seems to me that you \_\_\_\_\_.” (is usually used with expresses perception)

“It sounds to me that your sister is really trying to work things out with the family.”

**Describes past**

“I told my mother that I was grateful for everything she has done for me.”

“I went to college 5 years ago.”

“When I was a kid, I was bit by a dog and now I can’t seem to get over it.”

“I used to hate my brother.”

**Describes possibility or hypothetical situation**

“If I can’t get into UBC I know I will be disappointed.” (sometimes used with other codes – i.e. describes self, expresses perception)

**Describes relationship**

**Describes self**

“I suck at tennis.”

“I’m a generous person.”

“It really wasn’t like me to behave that way.”

**Describes situation or event**

Or describes present

**Describes content (for listener)**

**Disagrees** (denies)

Includes partial disagreement

**Disapprove**

Negative evaluative or judgment statement

“I don’t like them.”

“She really should have known better than to behave like that.”

**Dismissive or diminishing statement**

“Oh c’mon.”

“Don’t be silly.”

“That’s nonsense.”

“Whatever.”

**Elaborates**

Extends a previous statement

Provides more information, adds depth to a previous statement, gives a deeper explanation.

**Encourages**

Give confidence, cheer, hearten

**Evaluative or judging statement**

Focused on a phenomenon, or event, or person with approving or disapproving

**Expresses anger** (irritation, exasperation, rage, disgust, envy, torment)

“I was so pissed off with him.”

“I was furious.”

**Expresses belief or disbelief** (concrete as opposed to tentative)

“I just know things are going to work out.”

“I don’t believe in God.”

“I can’t believe this is happening to me.”

**Expresses desire/need**

I need, I want, I wish....

**Expresses disgust** (usually more of a facial expression, distaste, expression of not liking or



loathing)

“It totally grossed me out. It was disgusting to be in that cell with all those crack addicts.”

**Expresses dissatisfaction/discontent**

“School isn’t what I thought it would be.”

Expression of dissatisfaction sometimes coded with expresses sadness or some other emotion.

**Expresses doubt**

“I’m not sure I can handle that.”

“I doubt I have the ability to get into university.”

Questioning, has emotional content, not about indecisiveness

“I don’t know about that, I don’t know if that fits for me.”

Possible others - disagrees, dismissive statement

**Expresses exhaustion**

**Expresses fear** (horror, nervousness)

Overwhelmed or expressing a lot of concern.

**Expresses frustration**

“It totally sucks that I didn’t get the job I wanted.”

**Expresses guilt**

**Expresses gratitude**

“Thank you.”

“I really appreciate what we are doing here.”

“I’m thankful for this opportunity.”

**Expresses humor**

Tells a joke

Says something funny (either intentional or unintentional)

Contextual use of humour, use of wit, lightheartedness, kidding around

**Expresses joy**

Happiness, cheerfulness, zest, contentment, pride, optimism, enthrallment, relief

**Expresses hope**

**Expresses liking**

Liking of idea, experience, object, person; not love

**Expresses love** (affection, lust, longing)

**Expresses past realization**

**Expresses perception or opinion or hunch**

Is usually a tentative statement or interpretation

“It seems to me that you may be quite similar to your dad in that way.”

“Correct me if I’m wrong but I think \_\_\_\_\_.”

“I think \_\_\_\_\_”

**Expresses realization**

Client expresses an “ah-ha” moment in the present tense.

“I realize that these people are very important to me.”

“Wow, I’ve never thought about that before.” (add surprise to the code)

“Oh no, really. I hadn’t thought about that consequence before.” (add disappointment to the code)

See above for past realization

**Expresses relief**

**Expresses sadness**

Suffering, disappointment, embarrassment, shame, neglect, regret, sympathy

“I was so depressed about it.”

“I was really hurt when my stepmother attacked me like that.”

**Expresses satisfaction**

**Expresses surprise**

More of a facial expression

“I was really surprised that she reacted that way.”

“Oh wow!”

**Expresses uncertainty**

Is about decision-making. Not being able to sort something out. Not able to accurately predict.

“I’m not sure.”

“I can’t decide what option to take.”

**Expresses understanding**

“I get that.”

“I see where you’re coming from.”

“That makes sense.”

“I see what you mean.”

### **Expresses worry**

“I’m worried about my exam.”

### **Incomplete statement**

Can be questions, statements, or sentences.

### **Interrupts**

### **Invites or elicits a response**

Use of hand gesture to elicit a response from a client

“You know what I mean?”

“Right?”

### **Justifying**

### **Laughs**

### **Offers a suggestion**

### **Paraphrasing**

Repeats previous statement (in different words)

Repeats a previous statement in your own words

### **Partial agreement**

Half-hearted agreement

“Sort of.” (specifying the amount of agreement)

### **Pause**

A break in the sentence or dialogue, silence, a pregnant pause

### **Praises**

Compliments, admiring remark, accolade, congratulates

“Good for you”

“Look at you!”

“Congratulations.”

“It’s terrific that you have such great insight.”

**Provides information**

“You can get an application on-line if you go to the website.”

Provides example

Provides explanation

**Reflects affect**

Capturing an image that is beyond what was previously stated

Beyond paraphrasing

Advanced empathy, empathy

“You felt disappointment when you didn’t get into UBC this year.”

**Reflects cognition**

Advanced empathy, empathy

“That was a tough situation for you.”

“You didn’t think that was the right way to go.”

“So you’ve been thinking about a number of career options over the last year.”

**Repeats**

**Requests**

Asks the person to do something. Asks for

“Could you sign this form?”

**Shares similar experience**

**Statement**

**States a plan**

“I’m going to go to school next term.”

“I will be here next week for my appointment.”

**Suggests**

Or offers a suggestion

“I’d like to suggest that your father didn’t mean to hurt your feelings.”

**Suggests a topic for discussion (i.e., “I think we could start with...”)**

**Summarizes**

**Unintelligible response**

Can't be understood on tape or through transcription

**Validates**

"I know"

## Appendix H: Resource List



### Resources and Supports

**Please call 911 if you or others are at risk of immediate harm.**

#### **211**

211 is confidential and free service that provides information and connection to services.

<https://211.ca/>

Call: 211

#### **Bounce Back**

Bounce Back is a free program from the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) that helps you build skills to improve your mental health.

<https://bounceback.cmha.ca/>

#### **Canadian Psychological Association – Finding a psychologist**

Free website that provides information on how to find a psychologist in Canada.

<https://cpa.ca/public/findingapsychologist/>

#### **Canada Suicide Prevention Service**

24/7, Free

English & French: 1-833-456-4566

#### **Government of Canada**

List of mental health support resources, organized by province.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/mental-health-services/mental-health-get-help.html#a9>

#### **Shelter Safe**

Free website connecting women and children with the support and services they need when experiencing domestic violence.

<https://sheltersafe.ca/>

**Wellness Together Canada**

Mental health and substance use support for people in Canada and Canadians abroad.

24/7, Free

<https://www.wellnesstogether.ca/en-CA>

Crisis line: 1-866-585-0445

## **Appendix I: Narrative Summaries**

### **Couple 1 Individual Narrative: Clementine**

Clementine is 32 years-old, identifies as a cis-woman, and is of European cultural background. Clementine resides in a major city in a province in Western Canada with her common-law partner of 6 years (Vernon). Based in the living room of her apartment, Clementine teleworks 15 to 20 hours per week doing healthcare research. Clementine is also a full-time graduate student (mostly in-person classes) and attends an internship (in-person) as part of her education program, and has teleworked for about 3 years (since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic). Clementine started teleworking full-time and moved to part-time teleworking to attend school. Clementine enjoys teleworking since it is flexible, and she can spend-time throughout the day with her partner. However, Clementine also finds teleworking to be distracting due to her working in the living room by the television and the kitchen.

During the conversation, Clementine often provided topics for the couple to discuss. For example, at the beginning of the conversation, Clementine tried to get the conversation started by providing clarification about what they should talk about and building off of what Vernon said. Clementine expressed pride in their relationship thriving throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and appreciated the positive impacts of teleworking on their relationship. Clementine described freedom around teleworking to spend time with others and Vernon separately.

Throughout the conversation, Clementine validated Vernon and provided information for his decision making. Furthermore, Clementine summarized their working from home situation briefly through comparison of past and present experiences. Clementine facilitated discussion around Vernon's wellness. Clementine used reflections and humour to actively listen to Vernon's experience of being online while lightening the mood. Clementine shared her



experiences and opinions of work-life wellness to Vernon, particularly related to distractions such as the television, video games, and housework:

I think you have it a little bit easier being in the office, because you can kind of close the door. But like being here, the living room and kitchen are like one space. So, I see, I feel it, I feel the environment.

Overall, Clementine believed that the joint conversation was “performative” and had less natural flow and humour to it than their regular conversations.

Clementine’s overall goal for the conversation was to gain insight into Vernon’s experience of work-life wellness while working from home by having a direct conversation on the topic. Other goals for Clementine during the conversation include: 1) help Vernon understand his situation and improve his wellness; and 2) take care of their cat and potential dog. In general, Clementine wanted to prioritize space in the home to work, manage her work hours, get out of the house, and exercise.

### **Couple 1 Individual Narrative: Vernon**

Vernon is 32 years-old, identifies as a cis-man, and is of English Canadian cultural background. Vernon resides in a major city in a province in Western Canada with his common-law partner of 6 years (Clementine). Vernon has a diploma in information technology. Based in a private office in his apartment, Vernon teleworks 40 hours per week in the information technology sector. Vernon started teleworking when the COVID-19 pandemic began in Canada.

Overall, throughout the conversation, Vernon seemed to go along with the conversation as prompted by Clementine and actively listened to Clementine. In the start of the conversation, Vernon shared his experience of working from home and clarified what topics are included under work-life wellness. Vernon listened and agreed with Clementine's positive experiences of working from home. As Vernon continued to describe his experience of working from home, he compared past and present experiences. Vernon expressed pride in the relationship getting through the COVID-19 pandemic and described how the relationship has adapted to working from home:

[I was] happy that we had, I guess, maybe thankful even that we had the opportunity to do it, because not everybody had a good COVID experience, right? Not everybody has had a healthy experience when they were forced to be isolated. And now we were forced to be isolated, and we continued to be fairly isolated, just by the nature of our lives and our work. And just I'm thankful that we are the people who, I guess, are just healthy enough and grateful that we can make it work.

Additionally, Vernon described impacts of teleworking on their cat and problem-solved around potentially getting a dog in the future. Vernon shared his experience, feelings, and desires around travelling. While Vernon shared his experiences of wellness, he defended his perspective

in a lively debate with Clementine. Vernon tried to explain the problems that he experiences with focusing on his teleworking and how this relates to going to the gym and spending time with friends. Vernon also shared his experiences and challenges of working online and interacting with coworkers, which seems to be an important topic for Vernon. Vernon elicited support from Clementine to face his challenges with being online. Vernon described that the large amount of time he spends online does not fit with his self-perceptions:

I think my whole life is online right now between, as you said, like, so I work on my computer, when I socialize with friends it's on the computer because they don't live here, and when I'm just alone, and I'm looking for something to do I'm on the computer doing my own thing. And I don't think of myself as that person; but, I'm the essence of that person. I am like entirely just a digital life, right?

Overall, Vernon perceived the joint conversation to be “pretty typical” of how he and Clementine normally act around each other.

Vernon’s overall goal for the joint conversation was: 1) to talk about his experience of work-life wellness; and (2) and to determine whether he and his partner had mutual understanding about the situation; that is to see if him and Clementine were “on the same page.” In the beginning of the conversation, Vernon tried to figure out what to talk about while expressing his situation of working from home and hoping to feel understood by Clementine. As the conversation progressed, Vernon continued to share his experience while striving to find common ground. In general, Vernon’s priorities for work-life wellness include getting out of the house, taking advantage of his flexible work environment, maintaining focus, managing his time, spending time with friends, and exercising.

### **Couple 1 Joint Narrative: Clementine and Vernon**

Vernon and Clementine have been common-law partners for more than 6 years and have no children. Vernon and Clementine have resided in a major city in Western Canada with their cat for 1.5 years. Clementine teleworks 15 to 20 hours per week in healthcare research and Vernon teleworks 40 hours per week in the information technology sector. Vernon works in a private office in their apartment and Clementine works in the living room. Clementine is also a full-time graduate student (mostly in-person classes) and attends an internship (in-person) as part of her education program.

Due to working from home, Vernon was able to relocate with Clementine 1.5 years ago from another province so she could attend graduate school. Both members of the couple experienced a sense of pride for how their relationship grew over the COVID-19 pandemic. Clementine and Vernon took time during the conversation to share their favourite aspects of working in the same space, such as having conversations and sharing mutual lunches. Vernon reflects:

[I was] happy that we had, I guess, maybe thankful even that we had the opportunity to do it, because not everybody had a good COVID experience, right? Not everybody has had a healthy experience when they were forced to be isolated. And now we were forced to be isolated, and we continued to be fairly isolated, just by the nature of our lives and our work. And just I'm thankful that we are the people who, I guess, are just healthy enough and grateful that we can make it work.

Overall, Clementine and Vernon's goal for their joint conversation was to discuss their individual and mutual experiences of teleworking. Throughout the conversation, the couple maintained a comfortable posture and appear to be sustaining physical contact by touching legs.

The couple's ideas blended together as they often finished each other's sentences and shared each other's perspectives. Parts of the conversation were light with a lot of laughter, and the couple seem to be in agreement with each other. In contrast, other sections of the conversation involved more debate and partial disagreement. However, even when discussing touchy subjects, the couple interacted in a way that was positive. Specifically, even though Clementine and Vernon disagreed on the relationship between spending time with friends and exercising, they quickly came to an agreement:

Clementine: Yeah, like I mean, obviously, still, you could be getting more exercise. Your friends don't have anything to do with that, necessarily. But I thought I...

Vernon: I was going to the gym with my friend in the city we used to live in and that also was a socialization thing.

Clementine: That's true. You had a buddy, yes.

At the beginning of the joint conversation, Vernon and Clementine tried to get a conversation going about a mutually important topic (exercise) and to figure out how to assist Vernon with balancing life and telework. As the conversation proceeded, Vernon and Clementine discussed the positives of working from home including impacts on their relationship and multi-tasking. Furthermore, Clementine commented on how their relationship has changed with teleworking specifically related to spending time together:

We do kind of just naturally see more of each other. Before, when we both used to work, and then only come home at 5 and then see each other for like that amount of time before bed, it made it harder to do other things because we we're like, "oh, well, I want to spend time with my spouse instead of go out with friends."

Another important topic of conversation was the impacts of telework on their pet and ways to support their pet. Clementine worries about the cat's level of dependence on her and

Vernon:

Clementine: I think our cat has benefited from us being home too, although maybe it has made him have attachment issues.

Vernon: Yeah, as we say this, he's like leaning against me right now.

Clementine: Yeah.

Vernon: No, that's true. It has definitely affected the cat. I think it's probably good; but, it definitely does give the cat a certain level of over attachment like maybe it's getting hard on the cat when we leave.

The primary topic of the joint conversation was Vernon's work-life wellness, although the couple also support the health and wellness of Clementine. Specifically, Clementine and Vernon strived to understand Vernon's travelling situation and how he can best take advantage of working remotely to travel abroad. The couple also discussed ways to support Vernon's wellness. In her individual interview, Clementine expressed frustration around Vernon's wellness habits, "he doesn't get exercise when we have a gym in our building, and it's very easy for him to and he's just not taking that initiative." Likewise, in his individual interview, Vernon shared Clementine's frustration and acknowledged that he is "a little embarrassed by [his] lack of motion in a day and in the week." Vernon's wellness routine was part of a larger discussion on the mutual challenges that the couple has experienced with distraction and focus, which impacts their work-life wellness:

Clementine: Maintaining focus while working at home can be really distracting, especially with a pet who then maybe meows or if your house is kind of dirty, that's a big

one for me. If the house is dirty, I'll get distracted and start cleaning it or use it as an excuse not to work. It's like "well, I can't work in a dirty environment, I need to clean" or something like that.

In summary, Clementine and Vernon appear to be involved in the following joint projects related to work-life wellness:

- **Maintaining and fostering a thriving relationship as a couple despite changing life circumstances such as teleworking and relocating to a new city.**
- **Collaborating to promote Vernon's and Clementine's overall health and wellbeing.**

### **Couple 2 Individual Narrative: Lindsay**

Lindsay is 29 years-old, identifies as a cis-woman, and is of English Canadian cultural background. Lindsay resides in a major city in Western Canada with her common-law partner of 2 years (they have lived together previously). Lindsay is a full-time graduate student in a healthcare profession. She attends classes and an internship related to her degree on an in-person basis. Lindsay occasionally completes schoolwork from home. Lindsay has grown accustomed to Harrison working from home; however, she worries about having time for herself and splitting up the domestic labour.

Throughout the conversation, Lindsay actively listened to Harrison describe his experience by acknowledging, approving, and paraphrasing. Lindsay seemed calm and petted the dog throughout the conversation, even though she described feeling anxious about topics related to enjoying alone time and her contribution to household chores during her individual interview. Lindsay described her experience of Harrison teleworking related to distribution of household labour and received validation from Harrison about her role in the household labour:

Lindsay: Chores is the one that stands out for me the most because I think about it a lot throughout the week, especially when I get home from internship and I'm pretty pooped and then you're making dinner a lot of nights and I do feel like I need to make up for that on other days as much as I can.

Harrison: Yeah, I think you do. It doesn't really bother me too much.

Lindsay provided her own evaluations and perspective related to Harrison's experience of teleworking and interruptions. Lindsay acknowledged the couple's accomplishment in learning how to live together and manage distractions for Harrison with his experience of ADHD:



And I recognize that part of that has been us both being more aware of ADHD stuff and talking about that a lot and I think that has helped me think differently about how I interact when you're working just because I know that sometimes you get super focused and you need to be left in that super focus unless there's something that has to be said.

Lindsay directed the conversation towards discussing Harrison's experience of teleworking versus working in a traditional office setting. Lindsay actively listened to Harrison speak about the positives of teleworking and talked about how the teleworking situation works for both of them. Lindsay communicated her contentment with Harrison enjoying his teleworking arrangement. Lindsay seemed to have self-reflective thoughts about the conversation that were not explicitly expressed during the main interview, as per the individual interview. For example, during her individual interview, Lindsay acknowledged self-growth around openness to teleworking for Harrison:

When Harrison first expressed that he really didn't want to be working in an office anymore.... I definitely had judgmental feelings about that... But that may be partly because I was like "Oh, my gosh! I'm never going to be alone in the house ever." I understand it a lot better now and I have a lot more empathy for why it works really well for him to work from home.

Additionally, in Lindsay's individual interview, she expressed her perspective on how the pandemic shifted individual and collective standards of work expectations:

I think there's been a shift in terms of being more open to different ways of doing things and the idea that that's okay, which, I'm sure, is a theme of the COVID pandemic for a lot of people. Just kind of questioning what the standards are that have been laid out for us,

and how important it is to adhere to those, if things are still getting done and getting done well.

After Lindsay gave Harrison an opportunity to share his experience and enjoyment of his workspace, she changed the topic to talk about her own experience and appreciation of alone time. Lindsay spoke up a bit more in this section. Lindsay reported feeling nervous about discussing time away from each other since she did not want Harrison to feel rejected and she was relieved when Harrison validated her desire for alone time. Lindsay carefully addressed her desire for physical space from Harrison without making it sound like she needs to get away from him:

When we're here at the same time on a weekday, we both have work to do, we still get that separation where we're doing our own thing for a while. We're not just like in each other space the whole day, every day, or anything.

Lindsay's gratitude for alone time was juxtaposed with her past struggles with separation from Harrison.

Overall, Lindsay's goal for the conversation was to share her perspective about Harrison's teleworking including impacts on her, even though the conversation focused mainly on him. Lindsay felt that the conversation was fairly typical since they often discuss their relationship; however:

I'm sure both of us were being like pretty thoughtful about... extra thoughtful about how we said things to each other because we knew it was a recorded interview. I don't feel like it was to an extent that was like really artificial.

### **Couple 2 Individual Narrative: Harrison**

Harrison is 29 years-old, identifies as a cis-man, and has an English Canadian background. Harrison resides in a major city in a Western Canada with his common-law partner of 2 years. Working out of an office in their apartment, Harrison teleworks 40 hours per week in software development for a company that is located two time-zones away from where he lives. Harrison started teleworking just prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, to better support his health and wellness. Harrison loves teleworking since it gives him privacy, focus, and comfort. Harrison's biggest obstacle for teleworking is managing the needs of the couple's dog during the workday.

Harrison shared a lot throughout the main interview and often gestured with his hands while speaking. In the beginning of the conversation, Harrison described his experience of teleworking related to interruptions to the workday (e.g., their dog). After describing his challenges, Harrison outlined positive aspects of working from home. Harrison presented a nuanced view by exploring the how distractions can sometimes help him to manage his focus:

Harrison: The distractions, I think are minimal.

Lindsay: Yeah.

Harrison: And I'd say welcome because it's nice to just have, especially when I am sometimes getting super focused. I kind of feel myself tensing up.

Lindsay: Tightening up.

Harrison: Tightening up with focus, as I'm focusing all one problem and sometimes, especially when I get stuck in that hyper focused state, it can be nice to have a forced break.... because sometimes I just need to step away, or just like stop thinking about it for certain problems to be easier to solve.

Harrison continued the conversation by sharing his perspective on how far the couple has come in terms of their ability to manage distractions while he is working.

Later in the conversation, Harrison compared and contrasted teleworking and working from the office including highlighting some of the positives of working from the office, even though he personally prefers working from home. Particularly, Harrison shared with humour his appreciation of his teleworking routine in comparison to when he worked from a traditional office:

I can get up and start working at 7, and then, after my morning meetings, I take my shower.... And I don't have to like rush to get all that stuff done).... That was one thing about working in an office that I hated. Just the idea that someone could be looking over my shoulder. What if I just need a second to take a break, and I want to like play a game or something? I could just do that here, it's no big deal, and as far as I know the superiors (Lindsay: laughs) have only good things to say about my performance.

Harrison also talked about how much he likes not having to commute to work. Overall, teleworking seems to be a good fit for Harrison, especially considering his health and ADHD diagnosis. Although Harrison switched to teleworking before the pandemic for health reasons, the pandemic seemed to normalize teleworking for him:

The pandemic normalized working from home just in time for me. And it has just been a breath of fresh air.

Furthermore, Harrison provided a thorough description of his workspace, including his enjoyment of the space and changes he has made to promote that enjoyment (e.g., adding noise-dampening curtains). Harrison described the separation between his personal life and work and how this separation is facilitated by dedicating a space in the home to work:

One thing I definitely appreciate is, if you're not doing anything after dinner, we'll hang out and watch a movie or TV show. So, I get my break from this office space.

Near the end of the interview, Harrison gave Lindsay the space to share her thoughts about having alone time and he wondered about how he might help Lindsay to feel comfortable doing "alone time" activities when he is home with the idea in mind that he may work from home indefinitely:

If we have our own property, will I have my own little office? Probably. But will I work from home a lot? I hope so. When will Lindsay get her alone time? Imagine we have kids. It's just like kids at school, Lindsay's at work. I'm here in the house by myself, that's going to be great for me. I'm going to love that; but, Lindsay will won't really have the same opportunity to do so, because even if the kids were gone, I'd still be here, little house gremlin, just creeping out from the shadows.

Overall, Harrison's goal for the conversation was to reconnect on the couple's feelings about him working from home, including the things he appreciates and finds challenging. Harrison found their conversation to be natural as it was full of recollection of past events followed by mutual understanding as is typical for their usual conversations.

### **Couple 2 Joint Narrative: Lindsay and Harrison**

Harrison and Lindsay have been common-law partners for 2 years and do not have children (they have lived together previously as well). Lindsay and Harrison have resided in a major city in Western Canada with their dog for 1.5 years. Lindsay is a full-time student with in-person classes who occasionally does schoolwork from home and Harrison teleworks 40 hours per week in software development. Harrison works in a private office in their apartment and Lindsay does schoolwork in their living room.

Overall, Lindsay and Harrison wanted to understand each other's experiences of commuting, household chores, teleworking, and alone time. The couple shared pride in how far they have come as a couple in regard to accommodating Harrison working from home, including having individual alone time and sharing space. Lindsay and Harrison shared appreciation of Harrison's teleworking.

The couple had the conversation in Harrison's office and petted their dog throughout the conversation. Throughout the conversation, Lindsay and Harrison often talked simultaneously and provided minimal encouragers such as "mhmm" and "yeah." Lindsay and Harrison faced each other for most of the conversation, except for when Harrison tilted towards the camera while describing his office. Harrison talked the most during the conversation, perhaps because it was mainly focused on Harrison's experience.

The conversation began with Harrison describing his highlights and challenges around teleworking over the past three years. The couple were proud of how far they have come in managing Harrison's focus during the workday. In their individual interviews, both members of the couple had similar reflections about Harrison's telework and ADHD:

Lindsay: I feel like that was a pretty significant turning point for us in learning about ADHD. And I feel like that really took us a long way into terms of being able to understand each other better and cohabitate better. And so, I think when I brought that up there was definitely a feeling of pride. This feels like an accomplishment that we've made together.

Harrison: It took a lot of learning on both of our parts to figure out what kind of things does ADHD affect when it comes to working, distraction, and hyperfocus.... So, I feel like acknowledging this stuff out loud in this conversation feels good because it reminds me that we have come a long way with figuring out how to cohabitate with me working from home all the time.

Lindsay and Harrison strove to develop a mutual understanding of how Harrison feels about teleworking in relation to working from the office. Both members of the couple shared enjoyment of Harrison's current teleworking situation, especially related to accommodations for his health. Harrison provided a detailed description of his office environment (where the research interviews took place). Lindsay and Harrison wanted to develop an understanding of how Harrison's office supports physical separation during the workday:

Harrison: It really feels like the distance between our desks really helps in the mind set separation. When we go into these spaces, we're working, plus the curtains help block sound from leaving the room. This room has almost a sound wall, especially if the AC unit is on.

Talking about separation while both being at home in a way that felt comfortable to both members of the couple was important to Lindsay and Harrison.

In summary, Lindsay and Harrison appear to be involved in the following joint projects related to work-life wellness:

- **Balancing time alone with time together considering Harrison teleworks.**
- **Keeping the puppy happy so that they can go about their lives and work in a way that is comfortable and convenient.**



### **Couple 3 Individual Narrative: Colleen**

Colleen is 62 years-old, identifies as a cis-woman, and is of European cultural background. Colleen resides in a major city in a province in Western Canada with her spouse of 40 years (William). Colleen has a bachelor's degree and started teleworking abruptly when the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions started in Canada (around March of 2020). Based in the spare bedroom, Colleen teleworks around 37.5 hours per week in the healthcare sector. Colleen misses the social and fitness aspects of working from the traditional office.

At the office it was easier to get up and move around rather than just kind of pluck myself in the chair and get up 3 hours later, right? It was because there was always kind of somebody to go talk to, or we would walk down to the coffee shop with somebody or something like that.

Colleen also experiences occasional distractions from family while teleworking, which can be problematic while she is facilitating workshops.

During the conversation, Colleen and William co-constructed their experience of teleworking through sharing their individual perspectives and listening to each other. To start the conversation, Colleen described her experience while directly asking for William's perspective about work-life wellness and teleworking. Colleen defended her opinions about work-life wellness and often transitioned the focus to William by asking him questions. In her individual interview, Colleen expressed her reasoning for focusing the conversation on William:

I find that I ask the questions because he's not really forthcoming with what he's thinking so a lot of that is my kind of prompting him because he'll wait to share them and then they build up to the point where he can't keep them to himself anymore.

Colleen also directed the conversation away from certain topics.

Colleen: So, do you have any goals?

William: Like I said, more life, less work.

Colleen: Ok other than that.

The conversation ends on the discussion of potential hurdles and solutions to teleworking abroad. Overall, Colleen described the discussion as atypical as it was calmer than their usual discussions about “emotionally charged” topics.

Overall, Colleen’s goal for the conversation was to explore William’s perspectives on teleworking given he does not share much on the subject regularly. Colleen hoped to develop a shared understanding of their experiences of transitioning to working from home and boundary setting:

We set up little rules, like if your office doors closed, I know that you're in a meeting or doing something that you are focused on. That’s your focus time, and so I respect that, and you do the same and especially when I’m teaching, because that's more than just work because that can't be interrupted, right?

While staying on the topic of work-life wellness, Colleen tried to envision the future of teleworking with William and find a way to take a vacation. In general, Colleen prioritized privacy, exercise, and vacation planning.

### Couple 3 Individual Narrative: William

William is 64 years-old, identifies as a cis-man, and is of English Canadian cultural background. William resides in a major city in a province in Western Canada with his spouse of 40 years (Colleen). Based in his home office, William teleworks around 20 hours per week as a consultant in the petrochemical industry. William has a bachelor's degree. William started teleworking about ten years ago, and he enjoys teleworking as it suits his personality and desire for flexibility. William prefers his space while teleworking, and the couple works on separate floors to accommodate this preference:

Colleen: You know what I think helps, though? Is the fact that we're on separate floors.

William: It's like being in separate buildings.

Throughout the conversation, William described his perspectives with humor to get his point across in a friendly way while following Colleen's lead in the conversation. William was willing to co-construct his teleworking experience with Colleen and provide his opinion of Colleen's work-life wellness. Lastly, William expressed a desire to vacation and telework abroad and remained optimistic about finding solutions to obstacles:

Colleen: I wonder if a person could rent like a station a workstation.

William: I'm sure you can. There's always a solution.

In the individual interview, William provided short responses to the researcher. However, William was open during the conversation and expressed his needs:

William: I think we have achieved homeostasis. You pretty much leave me alone to do my thing. I pretty much leave you alone to do your thing except when the dog starts getting demanding.

Colleen: Somebody needs to stop what they're doing to look after...

William: It seems like I'm always the one that has to break my day up in order to see those needs though.

Colleen: Yeah, well that's because I'm on the clock.

William: I know, it's kind of annoying though.

Colleen: My schedule is not as flexible as yours

William: Mhmm.

Overall, William described the conversation as typical because they were not fighting.

William's goal for the conversation was to see where the conversation went, and he responded candidly to the researcher when asked about goals:

William: I honestly had no goal going into that conversation, because I had no idea what was going to happen. I would just kind of let it happen, and let her drive and see where we went. So yeah, no goals.

Researcher: Well, I mean, I guess your goal was to be open to possibilities of conversation.

William: My goal was to not look stupid and have a 3 minute conversation, and then stare at each other for the next 17 minutes while it's recording us.

In terms of goals throughout the conversation, William wanted to be a good conversational partner and wanted Colleen to understand the challenges of his experience of working from home. Additionally, William wanted Colleen to hear his perspective on her working and physical activity. Problem solving around retirement, with some added humor, seemed to be important to William:

Colleen: I was talking to my co-worker yesterday, and we both talked about how we would both probably work until 67. That seems to be kind of a midpoint. I mean I could

get more pension if I waited until 70 but I don't know if there's any real advantage to that other than that I have 3 more years of salary so it's really the salary that I'm missing out on if I retire, which is actually a fairly significant amount of money, too.

William: Depending on our situation, too.

Colleen: Yep, it depends what the market does.

William: Keep buying lottery tickets (Colleen: Yeah) or start buying lottery tickets because we haven't done that.

William also strived to find a creative way to vacation and reimagine teleworking for them as a couple. In general, William's priorities were personal space, household responsibilities, retirement, and vacation.

### **Couple 3 Joint Narrative: Colleen and William**

Colleen and William have been married for around 40 years and live together with their 25-year-old son and dog in a major city in Western Canada. Colleen teleworks around 37.5 hours per week in the healthcare sector and William teleworks around 20 hours per week as a consultant in the petrochemical industry. William and Colleen both work in private offices on different floors of their home. Colleen started teleworking when the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions started in Canada (March of 2020) and William started teleworking about ten years ago.

Colleen and William both hoped to have a productive conversation about work-life wellness and further understand each other's perspectives. Throughout the conversation, William made many jokes that made Colleen burst out in laughter:

William: You plug in your phone in your head. You just walk around the house all the time and I never know where you're going to be or where you're working. Are you working now? Oh, she's talking on the phone.

Colleen: Or I'm talking on my headset.

William: You're talking on your headset. I don't know if you're listening to something or you're talking to someone. I need to get you a red light on top of your head that says online.

Colleen and William were open with each other throughout the conversation and were willing to disagree on the human experience of interruptions to zoom meetings, Colleen's physical activity at home, and the time of their last vacation. The couple took the time to discuss boundary setting around them both teleworking such as privacy for Colleen when she is teaching and taking care

of their dog throughout the day. Periodically, Colleen would change topics or intentionally focus the conversation on William.

Both members of the couple shared a sense of loss and sadness around the economic downturn in the oil industry. In her individual interview, Colleen shared that during the recession William was laid off and “suddenly [she] had gone from a half time job to having to work full time to support [the] family.” Based on William’s facial expression when he discussed “the implosion” with Colleen, he appeared sad and disappointed.

Around the end of the conversation, the couple tried to come to a common understanding through problem solving, which ended the conversation on a high note. They both strived to have a good conversation about the future of telework in their home and hoped to find a way to vacation:

William: There's no reason we couldn't take a trip to the United States of America. You could work part-time from home from the office there.

Colleen: Well, that's true, take part vacation days. I've thought about taking half days of vacation instead of full days. And then so you work half a day and then play half a day.

William: You play in the morning when it's cool, and then when it's hot in the day you sit in the air conditioning, and you do your work.

Colleen: That could work. Maybe we should consider that.

In summary, Colleen and William appear to be involved in the following joint projects related to work-life wellness:

- **Planning for a vacation: figuring out a way to take a vacation together while considering work schedules.**
- **Planning for retirement: overhauling financial portfolio to ensure retirement.**

- **Sustaining the homeostasis of working from home.**



#### **Couple 4 Individual Narrative: Monica**

Monica is 32-years old, identifies as a cis-woman, and is of Latinx ethnic background. Monica resides in a city in Atlantic Canada with her spouse of 4 years (Thomas). Monica has a graduate degree and began working from home 2 years ago. Working in the upstairs guest bedroom, Monica teleworks 20 hours per week in the healthcare sector. Monica enjoys the peacefulness the flexibility, and the low financial cost of working from home:

I can arrange my schedule to maintain good mental health, so I'm not kind of all over the place, which means that whenever I take breaks between clients, I'm able to just be at home and be relaxed instead of being in a different environment that I'm uncomfortable in. I can make lunch whenever I'm hungry, instead of having to be at a particular time.

However, Monica can feel stuck upstairs during the workday since Thomas works on the lower floor.

During the conversation, Monica described her experience of working from home and asked Thomas for his perspective. Monica actively listened to Thomas' opinions on their work situation while providing her own ideas. Monica vented about being stuck upstairs during the workday. Additionally, she expressed her desire to have coworkers:

I wish I had coworkers, because I get to talk to them about what's going on with clients and stuff that I can't necessarily gain insight from you because you're not in the same field.

Overall, Monica's goal for the conversation was to learn something new about the couple's work-life wellness, given they have had similar conversations before. In the beginning of the conversation, Monica tried to engage Thomas in a conversation about their work-life wellness and see if they were on the same page. Then she tried to understand Thomas'

experience of connecting with coworkers and whether he found her distracting. In her individual interview, Monica expressed that she was relieved Thomas was not distracted by her working from home:

If he doesn't get bothered by the noisy garbage truck, I'm like, why am I worried about walking gently in the floor? So that was a funny moment, upon a realization that I shouldn't be worried about it.

Monica aimed to feel understood by Thomas and to increase his knowledge of the negative impacts of her feeling stuck up stairs. Lastly, Monica closed the conversation by overviewing any changes that needed to be made in terms of the couple's teleworking situation.

Throughout the conversation, Monica went back and forth between feeling validated and feeling dismissed. A common source of feeling dismissed came from her perception that Thomas was trying to fix her problems:

He suggested "you could just use the guest bed." When he suggested that, it's like "oh, you're trying to fix the problem again like you're not hearing how this actually is impacting me." And that's always been a thing, fixing mentality. So, it's the dismissiveness by fixing it.

However, when Monica felt dismissed or annoyed, humour between the couple helped take the edge off of her feelings.

In terms of typicalness, Monica found the conversation to be atypical or forced due to Thomas' noticeable discomfort and elevated level of dismissiveness. Monica also noticed that she asked more questions than she would usually need to in conversations with Thomas due to a lack of engagement on his part. Additionally, Monica felt tension between her desire to ask Thomas questions or to hold the silence:

I can hold the silence forever, if I wanted to. But he's my partner so I don't feel like I need to be holding my silence forever. So, I felt more inclined to be asking questions. As a result of the lack of flow in the conversation, Monica believed that they covered less content than they normally would when discussing work-life wellness. Generally, Monica prioritized discussing co-workers, distraction, and sharing space in the home.

#### **Couple 4 Individual Narrative: Thomas**

Thomas is 32-years old, identifies as a cis-man, and is of Caribbean ethnic background. Thomas resides in a city in Atlantic Canada with his spouse of 4 years (Monica). Thomas has a graduate degree and began working from home 1.5 years ago. Working in an open office space near the living room, Thomas teleworks 32 hours per week in the science sector and goes into the office 1 day per week. Thomas enjoys teleworking due to the lack of distractions, convenience, and his office set-up:

I appreciate being down here because I can walk around, and I can go to knuckle a bar and give my stretches.

Throughout the conversation, Thomas listened and followed along in the conversation while providing some details about his experience. For example, Thomas explained his preference for virtual interactions with coworkers rather than in-person interactions:

I think it would be more annoying being in the office. When I was there before, people would always come to my cubicle and talk to me, and I would be always distracted, and I just found that annoying. When you kind of eliminate that through like a Teams message, I can choose when I want to answer my Teams message and it's not somebody in my face.

Additionally, Thomas listened to Monica and sympathised with her experience. Thomas provided Monica with suggestions to help her feel more comfortable being upstairs:

Thomas: Yeah. But I mean, hey, our upstairs isn't all bad, there's a lot of windows. Which is maybe cold, colder.

Monica: Well, yeah, that's the biggest problem.

Thomas: So I mean, like not to try to fix anything. But what if we just buy a heater? Like would that make you feel more comfortable?

Even though Thomas provided Monica with ideas, Thomas stated that he was trying to understand rather than problem solve:

Thomas: I think [I was] more interested at this point just because she was talking about what makes her uncomfortable and that was the cold. So, just kind of figuring out her opinions of her office being up upstairs.

Researcher: Yeah. So, you're kind of like problem solving a little bit, trying to figure it out together.

Thomas: Yeah, trying not to problem solve. So, I did say I was not trying to solve or fix things, but I just was trying to maybe just learn a little bit more about it.

Lastly, Thomas described what he liked about working downstairs and expressed content for his current situation.

Overall, Thomas' goals for the conversation were to stay on topic and learn something new about the couple's work-life wellness. For example, Thomas began by trying to figure out how to engage in the conversation and feel at ease with the recording. Thomas then attempted to reflect on his experience of interacting with coworkers and compared it to Monica's experience of having no coworkers. As stated above, Thomas explained that he was trying to understand Monica's experience and not jump to problem solving. Additionally, Thomas tried to understand Monica's experience of working upstairs and reflected on his own workspace.

Thomas felt as if the conversation was a bit unnatural and forced since he was feeling tired and he had less to contribute to the conversation. Thomas also believed that the couple would have switched topics earlier if the conversation had taken place outside of the research

context. Otherwise, Thomas felt that the conversation was fairly typical and along the lines of a natural conversation. Generally, Thomas prioritized discussing co-workers, distractions, and sharing space in the home.

### **Couple 4 Joint Narrative: Monica and Thomas**

Monica and Thomas have been married for around 4 years and live together in a city in Atlantic Canada. Monica teleworks 20 hours per week in the healthcare sector and Thomas teleworks 32 hours per week in the science sector. Thomas and Monica work on separate floors of their home. Monica and Thomas started teleworking 2 years ago and 1.5 years ago, respectively.

Overall, Monica and Thomas both hoped to learn something new about their work-life balance as a couple. In the beginning of the conversation, both members of the couple tried to initiate and engage in a conversation about work-life wellness. They tried to understand their experiences of interacting with coworkers and each other throughout the workday:

Monica: I wish I had coworkers, because I would get to talk to them about what's going on with clients and stuff that I can't necessarily gain insight from you because you're not in the same field. So that's a little bit of a complex area for me.

Thomas: Yeah, and don't get me wrong. I definitely like having co-workers and I would feel really horrible without them. But I'm comfortable just keeping a virtual connection, doesn't have to be in person.

During the section on co-workers, Monica felt like Thomas did not consider her experience; however, Thomas noted in his individual interview that he was reflecting internally on Monica's experience. Furthermore, Monica and Thomas attempted to come to a mutual understanding of Monica's experience of being upstairs during the workday and they tried to understand the differences between their experiences of their at-home workspaces:

Monica: I have to just be upstairs and be in the bedroom. I don't get to kind of be in my own space this especially when you have meetings. I come down, and you have meetings,

and I can't just watch TV or listen to music, I have to get my food and go back upstairs.

Yeah, I think it kind of removes an area for me like I may not have an outside office, but I'm stuck upstairs as long as you're working.

In contrast, Thomas appreciates his current work set-up: "I don't really see any anything I would change.... Right now I like my setup."

Both members of the couple acknowledged feeling uncomfortable with the recording and tired during the conversation. The conversation contained long pauses and the couple both felt like the conversation felt forced and lacked flow. Monica and Thomas spoke softly throughout the conversation. Towards the middle of the conversation, there was some laughter as the couple decided on a topic and discussed challenges with Monica working upstairs.

In summary, Monica and Thomas seem to be involved in the following joint projects related to work-life wellness in the context of both of them working from home:

- **Understanding and figuring out together how to make working from home more comfortable for Monica, especially on days when both members of the couple are at home.**
- **Fostering an active lifestyle through movement and exercise within and outside of the workday.**



### **Couple 5 Individual Narrative: Ayla**

Ayla is 31-years old, identifies as a cis-woman, and has a European cultural background. Ayla resides in a major city in Western Canada with her common-law partner of approximately 1 year, Barry. Ayla is a doctoral student who works part-time in healthcare research and in healthcare practice. Ayla teleworks approximately 21 hours per week (out of a 35-hour work week) on research, practice, and schoolwork. She started working from home around March of 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Teleworking out of a dedicated home office, Ayla enjoys being able to make lunches with Barry and having the flexibility to be physically active during the day:

I want to look at the weather for the week and see what day it is going to be 30 degrees, and that's the day I want to go paddleboarding.

Ayla also shared that their individual private offices contribute to harmony in the home:

I was a very big advocate of us getting a bigger space so we could both have offices and I feel like when we were looking for house Barry was like, “we don't need a big space we can live in a small space,” and now he loves our offices, and I just don't know how people do it without .... For him that office is a sanctuary, he has a space to go to where he is undisturbed to do his work, and I think if we both didn't have that, it would be a disaster.

Throughout the conversation, Ayla actively listened to Barry while sharing her own perspectives and contrasting their differing needs and experiences. For example, Ayla actively listened to Barry while expressing her perspective about a past breakdown in communication. She then expressed her opinions about their schedules and imagined what it would be like to

have a more consistent routine. Ayla shared her desire to go paddleboarding during the weekday and problem solved around their different schedules. Ayla contrasted their experiences of stress in relation to making plans:

Yeah, I think the interesting thing is that different things cause us stress. So, for you not having a plan, the earlier you can plan, the less stress you're going to have, right? So, if you know, 3 weeks from now, we're going to take a day off and go do something that will be no stress for you, because you can plan for that, you can be ready for it. Whereas for me, that causes me more stress, because what if that's the day I need to do a lot of work.

As the conversation continued, Ayla described their daily routines while teleworking and acknowledged Barry's perspective. Ayla explained how important it is for her to get of the house and contrasted that with Barry's desire for routine. In her individual interview, Ayla stated, "I need to leave the house a lot more than he does. Just an internal desire to be out in the world a lot more than he does." Ayla went on to explain that her need to leave the house is related to teleworking:

On the days where I go out and work, and I come home, I'm good. I just want to stay at home. I'm done. I've been out in the world. That was a lot. I had a drive, I'm done. Whereas, if I work from home all day, I feel the need to go out into the world in some capacity.

As she actively listened to Barry, Ayla provided her perspective on his desire for routine and expressed her own desire for spontaneity. She explored how the couple has dealt with these different needs. Ayla also actively listened to Barry justify his desire for planned or indoor

activities. She explained the importance of leaving the house for her social life and work-life balance and contrasted her experience to Barry's experience.

Overall, Ayla's goal for the conversation was to explore work-life wellness in their relationship and check whether Barry had a similar experience to her regarding their work-life wellness. Additionally, Ayla tried to increase Barry's and her own understanding about different topics related to their work-life wellness (e.g., leaving the house, routines, indoor activities, spontaneity versus planning).

At a couple points in the conversation, Ayla felt frustrated and annoyed when she thought that Barry misunderstood her; however, she did not express this thought during the main conversation. Ayla explained her perspective during the individual interview:

If you are not currently a grad student, it's very hard to understand grad student life. I'm not allowed to have hobbies. I don't give myself things that I'm really interested in, because I will take any excuse not to write my dissertation.... That's hard to describe to Barry, because he's not in grad school, but also because he's a very disciplined person.

Furthermore, throughout the conversation Ayla had several realizations about herself and the couple's relationship. One of her realizations was that the couple were not experiencing friction related to their work-life wellness:

We've obviously had friction in our relationship, and we've had fights. We have things that we come back to that we disagree on. It doesn't really feel like the work from home thing has ever been a part of it. I think we both just do our own thing. I think we have the space to do our own thing which really helps, and we respect each other's work and time.

Ayla thought the conversation was very typical aside from Barry acting more engaged than he usually does in conversations. Ayla also observed that petting the dog during this

conversation likely helped them to feel calm and relaxed, but noted their usual conversations are similarly calm. Generally, Ayla prioritized the discussion of routine and activities.

### **Couple 5 Individual Narrative: Barry**

Barry is 32-years old, identifies as a cis-man, and has English Canadian and European cultural backgrounds. Barry resides in a major city in Western Canada with his common-law partner of approximately 1 year, Ayla. Barry teleworks 38 hours per week in the energy management sector. Barry started working from home in the Fall of 2020 due to starting work with a remote-based company. Teleworking out of a dedicated home office, Barry enjoys the flexibility of being able to take Fridays off and to adjust his workday hours since his employer is based out of Eastern Canada.

At the beginning of the conversation, Barry shared his experience of a past moment where work-life balance was difficult including his opinions and reactions. Furthermore, Barry described the couple's different needs for routine. Barry expressed his needs and desires while setting boundaries around his work schedule and considering what has worked in past summers:

I want to [go paddleboarding during a workday], but I also have a job. As much as I'd like to go out it is also very important to get a work-out in or generally just not work at 8 PM.

In his individual interview, Barry mentioned feeling frustration related to the first few minutes of the conversation but did not expand on his feeling. Additionally, Barry said that he was a bit distracted near the middle of the conversation because he was thinking back to his time in grad school.

In the conversation with Ayla, Barry shared his experience of workday scheduling while acknowledging Ayla's perspectives. Barry expressed satisfaction for their current office set-up and listened to Ayla's perspective on their daily routine. Barry actively listened to Ayla with

interest and curiosity. In his individual interview, Barry remarked on how different people can be impacted differently by the same activity:

I just think it's fascinating how different people can be, in terms of, if you take something, which in itself is 20 minutes out of your day – it's this little walk. And how that can affect one person so much more than another.

The conversation then shifted to a discussion on the connection between work-life wellness and Barry's chronic injury. Barry provided information on how his injury plays into him having less desire to engage in outdoor activities than Ayla:

When I'm healthy and can move my legs, I'm the same way as I need to get of the house. That's like a huge priority. But now, I'm just in pain, if I do. So, I do just want to sit at home.

During his individual interview, Barry reflected on his chronic injury as a barrier to getting outside:

When I feel pressured to go outside and do activities that I can't really do because I have a chronic injury, I get defensive because it's what I want to do but I can't.

As the conversation progressed, Barry actively listened to Ayla describe their different needs for routine. Barry provided further justification for his desire for planned activities. Additionally, Barry communicated his appreciation for indoor activities. Barry listened to Ayla and clarified his experiences and needs. Barry also contrasted their situation with other teleworking couples:

We got this place because we knew that quite a lot of people just found themselves in this life. My boss shares an office with her husband, and they have meetings all day. I don't know how they do it. I would hate that.

Barry's goal for the conversation was to talk honestly and openly about work-life wellness. This included Barry trying to augment Ayla's understanding of his perspective and figuring out a fair compromise around their different needs for workday routines. Barry tried to increase Ayla's understanding of his perspective on fitting in all of his activities into the week. In his individual interview, Barry expressed that he felt frustrated because he doesn't have enough time for his activities. Barry tried to understand Ayla's desire to leave the house and increase her understanding of his hopefulness for future activities when his health improves. In his individual interview, Barry expressed happiness about the role of Ayla's friends in her life:

I was quite glad that Ayla has other people to make her happy. If I can't go or do something, there's other people who can so I'm glad for that.

Barry also felt happy about how far they've come as a couple:

Living with someone and adapting your lives is finding it's own balance, and that can be hard but I've been glad that we've done it as well as we have so far.

Overall, Barry thought the conversation was "a little forced and weird" due to it being recorded. Barry perceived that they have not had a recorded conversation like this before; although, they have talked about work-life wellness in the past. Barry felt like he was more talkative, focused, and engaged than he usually is in conversations. Furthermore, Barry felt a stronger need to fill silences than is typical for him, as he was keenly aware of any pauses. Barry also commented on the pressure to stay on topic during the conversation. Barry observed that he

was somewhat distracted by their dog. Generally, Barry prioritized discussing his routine, hobbies, and the impacts of his injury.



### **Couple 5 Joint Narrative: Ayla and Barry**

Ayla and Barry have lived together for approximately 1 year in a major city in Western Canada. Ayla teleworks approximately 21 hours per week in the healthcare sector and Barry teleworks 38 hours per week in the energy management sector. Both members of the couple have their own private offices in their home. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, Ayla started working from home around March of 2020. Barry started working from home a few months later in the Fall of 2020.

Overall, Ayla and Barry hoped to have an open and honest conversation about work-life wellness to explore their perspectives and get on the same page. Barry and Ayla had a practical and focused conversation on daily routines and hobbies. They started the conversation by communicating openly about a past point of friction. They then tried to gain a mutual understanding of individual perspectives on workday routines. They problem-solved around Ayla's desire for spontaneous outdoor activities in contrast to Barry's desire for planning activities ahead of time:

Barry: I think we pick some days so like one day a week that I don't work until eventually I need to come back and that is fine.

Ayla: Yeah, the thing that'll be nice this summer, too is that you have Fridays off. So, we can do that on Fridays, too.

Barry and Ayla also tried to understand each other's perspectives on workday routines and planned versus spontaneous activities. They also explored their daily routine in comparison to other teleworking couples and tried to understand their different needs to leave the house. They also developed a mutual understanding of Barry's recovery and how it relates to getting

outside and planning activities. Health impacted their experience of work-life wellness as described by Ayla in their main interview:

I'm a little bit clouded because we've been sick for a week and a half, and so my brain wants to say, "yeah, but you never leave the house." But it's because we haven't been able to leave the house because we got sick.

As the conversation continued, they reflected on their relationship in terms of their different needs for routine. They developed a shared understanding of Barry's experience of routine and activities. Lastly, they tried to gain a mutual understanding of their individual desires and needs related to activities.

Barry and Ayla were equally focused and engaged in the conversation. Both members of the couple felt comfortable with expressing their needs and discussing minor points of friction. For Ayla, there was friction in communication. For Barry, there was friction in work-life balance. Both of them also mentioned occasionally feeling frustrated or misunderstood by the other.

Throughout the conversation, Barry and Ayla compared their experiences frequently and Ayla often described her perspective on Barry's experience. The conversation flowed quickly with both members of the couple talking fast at times and promptly filling silences. Both members of the couple petted the dog during the conversation.

In summary, Ayla and Barry seem to be involved in the following joint project related to work-life wellness in the context of working from home:

- **Figuring out how to engage in activities outside of the house as a couple while balancing Ayla's need for spontaneity and variety and Barry's need for scheduling and routine.**