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## Department of Media and Communications

# All Work and No Play - Does it make Jack a dull boy?
## An analysis of the diminishing boundaries between work and non-work time and places through the use of BlackBerry®

**Ece Inanç,**
MSc in Communication, Information and Society

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## Ece Inanc

**ABSTRACT**

This study aims to contribute to research on the blurring of boundaries between work and nonwork life by approaching the issue through an analysis of the use of one specific ICT; the BlackBerry. This device is gradually diffused in a variety of work fields that require fast communication, fast decision making, and instant exchange of information and of ideas. Through this device users are able to not only receive calls no matter where they are, but they are also able to receive e-mails and to go online. It is argued in this study that these features, while facilitating connection to work, clients and co-workers, will weaken the separation of work and nonwork times and activities due to its simultaneous use for the organization of nonwork life,. The hypotheses of this study tend to investigate the association between BlackBerry use and work independency.

In order to explore the hypotheses of this study, intensive literature was reviewed and the study was framed through boundary management strategies and the flexibility paradox, with an additional focus on technological influences. Then, a set of qualitative interviews were conducted, composed of four face-to-face and six real-time internet interviews. Respondents were selected on the basis of their job description, this being, service industry workers.

This study reveals that the BlackBerry does not cause an increase in the blurring of boundaries between work and nonwork life. The user respondents of the study report that the device only brought advantages to their already boundaryless lives, due to their work styles and personal choices.

## Introduction

In 1997, AT&T, one of the largest telecommunication providers in the world, created a commercial featuring the famous 1980s song by Cyndi Lauper, *Girls Just Wanna Have Fun.* The commercial presents a very busy mother getting ready to leave the house to go to a meeting with her clients, and her three little daughters who try to prepare their own breakfast thereby making a mess in the kitchen and talking about the nanny's bad habit of watching too much TV. When their demand for going to the beach together gets rejected, one of them asks innocently: *"Mom, when can I be a client?"* Next, the mother looks at her cell phone on the table and decides to go to the beach with her daughters, rather than to the office. The girls get ready and they run to the beach with their mom, flying birds accompanying them emphasizing how free they all are. In the last scene of the commercial the kids play happily in the sand while their mother receives the expected phone call and attends her meeting on her cell phone, sitting at the beach, wearing a casual outfit. The commercial ends with the AT&T logo and a very promising motto; "*It's all within your reach*".

The plotline chosen for this commercial is far from being arbitrary. Through a terse style, it sets the scene for the new working environment where women are as active as men and have difficulties on sparring time for their homes and children. Right at that point, technology comes to their aid, and facilitates their lives by enabling them to multitask and, *as seen on TV,* allowing them to conduct work tasks in nonwork places. In the setting of this commercial, the mother had everything within her reach; she was able to combine her different roles through her cell phone and thus fulfilled the responsibilities of both her job and motherhood at the same time. However, the advantages promoted in this polished, fun, and light advertisement also bear a negative side which is unsurprisingly omitted in advertisements, though it has great influence on individuals' lives.

Through the use of mobile wireless communication technologies users are connected to their work, to their family and to digital information anywhere and anytime. Through this connection (and the new nature of work), users obtain the flexibility to conduct work whenever and wherever they want. Being more accessible through ICTs enables flexibility and leads to a better integration of work and nonwork domains. Yet this flexibility begets a paradox of being always available, and the integration diminishes clear-cut boundaries, both resulting in an "always working" feeling for the employees.

Technology is a very fast developing field, transforming social life with a similar speed. Thus, academic research has difficulties catching up with the rapidly emerging new social issues. To date, research concerning the effects of technology on individuals' behaviours, social and family lives, and work experiences is limited to portable devices (i.e. cell phones), and the Internet, and their domestication. While these discussions continue, technology outdistanced academic research and promoted a device that combines cell phone and Internet access. Although it is a very popular debate, there is no academic research concerning the use of this comparatively new and more developed mobile ICT, the BlackBerry.

This research is an attempt to explore BlackBerry users' perceptions about blurring boundaries between different spheres of their lives. In order to achieve an understanding of the issue, this study is framed by the literature on changing work conditions and the flexibility paradox which leads to a blurring of boundaries between work and nonwork settings. Through interviews with BlackBerry users, this study aims to see, how it is possible to create and maintain boundaries between work and nonwork life when there is no escape from work.

## 1. THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

*"It's all within your reach"*

*AT&T Commercial Logo, 1997*

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The concepts of blurry boundaries and boundary management have been investigated over the years by many scholars in the fields of sociology, management and information systems. Especially in combination with the effects of changing nature of work and social life, this issue is becoming more complicated and exhausting to cope with for modern employees. Therefore, the literature concerning the changing nature of work and workplace considerably overlaps with the literature on blurring boundaries. The remainder of this theoretical chapter is thus structured as follows: The first section will examine the changing work nature, along with different factors responsible for this change. The investigation of these factors will then lead to a discussion of a technology enabled flexibility paradox, which will constitute a strong basis for blurring boundaries between different individual roles, most specifically between work and non-work areas.

### *Changing Nature of Work and Workplace*

Many factors have contributed to a worldwide change in the nature of work in the 20th Century. The relevant literature accentuates the shift from a product industry to a service industry (Tetrick and Quick, 2003; Howard, 1995), globalisation, the increasing number of women partaking in the workforce (Doorne-Huiskes et al., 2005; Naswall et al., 2008; The National Academy of Science, 1999; Jarvis, 2005), and advancements in information and communication technologies (Spiegel, 1995; The National Academy of Science, 1999; Naswall et al., 2008; Gambles et al., 2006). As a joint result of all of these factors, "the balance of work got tipped from hand to head, from brawn to brain" (Howard, 1995: 23). Although counted separately, these factors are in fact interrelated. This interrelation will be investigated throughout this section.

In *Changing Places of Work,* Felstead et al. (2005) give a history of the evolution of the household, first, as a centre for production before industrialization, then, as being separated from work following industrialization. Before industrialization, the authors claim, households

were places of "social reproduction and production" at the same time, thus "home and workplace were not separate spheres of social life" (p.41). However, with the emergence of industrialism most households were eliminated from being a simultaneous production unit, as a consequence of economic and institutional changes as well as the appearance of capitalist labour markets and specialist workplaces. According to the authors this separation between home and workplace seeded the emergence of separate spheres, such as public and private life, and has defined leisure and work. Jacobs and Gerson (2004) bring this discussion to its present form by arguing that these spheres that were once perceived as separate, "can no longer be easily divided" (p.97)

Different authors agree that the transition from a product-system based industry to a service based one is a factor that had a crucial effect on changing the nature of work (Tetrick and Quick, 2003; Hellgren et al., 2008). Service-oriented work is hereby characterized by its communicative nature, which requires an understanding of customers' desires. Consequently, in a service industry, the need for employees' individual responsibility and flexibility increases in order to be more 'goal-oriented' and 'self-directed'; this new organization involves a more subjective regulation of work than a traditional, objective one (Gallie et al., 1998). In return, this triggers a variety of discussions and questions concerning the society's changing temporal organization (Breedveld, 1998; Sennett, 1998). Some even mention a 'mania for deregulation' (Garhammer, 1995). Moreover, throughout different articles in the book *The Individual in the Changing Work Life*, the concept of "boundaryless job" is frequently elaborated on and is used to define the new type of work, which requires more flexibility and is regulated in a different, more individualized way than traditional jobs (Naswall et al., 2008; Allvin, 2008). Thus, it is contributing to the erosion of the former clear cut time distinctions between work and nonwork activities.

In the past century, with the emergence of globalisation, the world also became boundaryless. The work environment developed into a much wider cooperation and partnership among the companies all over the world. That made interaction with international companies necessary in order to survive in this new business environment. To reserve the competitive advantage in a boundaryless world, countries and organizations had to remove their own boundaries, creating a fundamental change in work (Naswal et al., 2008). One of the changes resulted from this transformation is the emergence of a 'traveller worker class' and the melting away of country-specific fixed working hours. The latter is mentioned in order to take into consideration time differences between countries that

collaborate, and workers who have to have a teleconference at 6am on a Sunday morning[1] to cope with the foreign partner company or clients, or travel to different countries or cities rather frequently for business. Furthermore, globalization also required firm scale flexibility and adaptability to fast changing production and consumer demands. However, as this study is concerned with effects on an individual level, organization-level effects of globalisation remains outside of the scope of this study.

As briefly indicated by Major and Germano (2006), "While globalization and the rise of the service industry have created a business need for flexible work schedules, advances in information and communication technologies have made them possible" (p.24). However, this statement neglects another important change that also created a need for flexible work schedules, contributing at the same time to the difficulty of controlling individual roles and boundaries. This third effect is the increasing number of women's employment, which, nowadays in many countries is equivalent to almost half of the employees (OECD, 2005 cited in, Naswall et al., 2008). Through the participation of women in the workforce the roles of men and women has changed in both the workplace and in the house, threatening the maintained equilibrium. As Eriksen states in *Tyranny of the Moment* (2001);

> In an age when both men and women participate fully in a tight and demanding labour market, and the distinction between work and leisure is becoming blurred, [...] gender roles are uncertain and contested (nobody can tell unequivocally what it means to be a good man or a good woman any more) (p.133).

Additionally, with the apparition of untraditional families (e.g. dual-earner couples, single parents, working parents), these employees now have more roles they need to fulfil and thus more difficulties in sparing time for all of them (Hakim, 2000), therefore requiring more flexible working hours (Sennett, 1998). An increase in the interference of work and nonwork time has resulted from the combination of all of the changes and consequences (Moen, 2003; Naswall et al., 2008). At that point, ICTs appeared as solutions to the "need for flexibility and control" (Frissen, 2000: 73). Yet, this flexibility is becoming more and more synonymous with "always availability", which generates a paradox that will be examined in depth in the next section. For now, let us remember Major and Germano's statement and attempt to see how developments in ICT make this so called required flexibility possible.

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[1] Information obtained during the interview with YM.

The central effects of technological developments have been discussed by many authors. Spiegel (1995) anticipated that the development of new technologies will have a profound influence on the context of work. One of his predictions from thirteen years ago is now merely ordinary for us; "[a] group of people will be able to share the same experience and the same environment, even though they are miles apart" (p.109). Spiegel continues by asserting how this technology will establish new opportunities to acquire a "worldwide clientele" and to become "more efficient" (p.109). Through the introduction of new ICTs, the necessity of having fixed times and places to fulfil certain tasks has lost meaning; the development of cell phones and invention of laptops made it possible to fulfil a task's requirements in a 'much wider variety of locations and times' (Felstead et al., 2005: 49). While the individual work-place is being restructured through advanced ICTs, the nature of work and the way it is redistributed is also modified, thereby lacking concern of time and place (Dougherty, 1998). It is now technically possible to carry out different assignments involving information processing remotely from any place that has suitable infrastructure – that may be as basic as a phone line, cell phone, or a computer with internet access (Huws, 1997).

The strongest asset of ICTs, which is also used as their marketing imagery, is their ability to overcome the limitations of time and space, satisfying a modern need. Elchardus (1996, cited in Frissen 2000) argues that this period of transition called "mobilized society" leads to a relinquishment of the structured and stable organization of time, of fixed hours and fixed times for work, for leisure and for holidays. In this newly emerging work and social environment, mobility is increased, time is more precious and access to information is essential. Sennett (1998) emphasizes the importance of the restructuration of society's temporal organization by arguing that the time dimension of the new capitalism, more importantly than its other aspects (e.g. high-tech data transmission, global stock markets, free trade), affects people's nonwork lives most directly.

### The Unbearable Lightness of Being Flexible

> *"More flexibility makes us less flexible and more choice makes us less free"* (Eriksen, 2001:4).

Flexibilisation as a consequence of the new context of work has been the focus of a vast amount of literature. This literature is closely linked with that of technological developments

and mainly covers the advancements in information technology that facilitated accessibility, hence provided flexibility and abated boundaries. Thus, in order to investigate flexibility, this section will simultaneously investigate technological effects on flexibility.

There are two ways of seeing flexibility. Flexibility in the workplace refers to employees' need to cope with fast changing consumer demands and production procedures (Perrons, 1999; Sennett, 1998); in the current service-centred industry, employees are facing rising demands on speed, quality, and performance (Doorne-Huiskes et al., 2005). Individual flexibility, on the other hand, refers to being able to multitask and fulfil different demands of different roles without time or place constraints (Doorne-Huiskes et al., 2005). In EU policy documents, flexibility is said to facilitate the combination of work and family life. Some authors mention a psychological contract between the employee and the employer in the context of flexibility, describing mutual and unwritten expectations between those two (Clutterbuck, 2003; Dourne-Huiskes et al., 2005). This contract should be able to change according to changing work and family situations. However, it is also argued that not all flexible policies developed by employers can be considered as 'family-friendly' (Doorne-Huiskes et al., 2005). A rather cynical view claims that these policies are not to help employees to maintain a work-life balance, but in fact they're made to orient employees to adjust their social and family life according to work demands and therefore to be available for longer hours (Grosswald et al., 2001; Lambert, 1993).

While philosopher John Stuart Mill thinks that flexible behaviour brings personal freedom, Sennett, agreeing with Eriksen, argues that flexibility causes disorder and that "revulsion against bureaucratic routine and pursuit of flexibility has produced new structures of power and control, rather than created the conditions which set us free" (Sennett, 1998: 47). A vast body of literature discusses the pros and the cons of this flexibility acquired through technology. Through ICTs, individuals are able to organize their activities around "flexible compartments of time rather than compartments of time associated with particular geographical spaces" (Green, 2002, p.287). Although on the one hand, these devices help to organize daily life by increasing control and flexibility, they're also regarded as threatening the privacy (Frissen, 2000) by making the user constantly available for work.

Flextimes, which are more individualized schedules as opposed to fixed shifts, are very popular in today's flexible organizations (Sennett, 1998). This flexibility of shifts also becomes flexibility of workplaces through portable or in-house embedded ICTs. Being able to

work outside of the office may sound like freedom but it has been argued that working at places which are traditionally known as leisure places can and will make the boundaries between work and non-work more blurry (Naswall et al., 2008). The most outstanding example to this blurring is homeworking. As very frequently addressed in the body of literature, controlling the boundaries between work and home was a very difficult task for homeworkers (Haddon, 2004), as they had one space for both and no transition time or place in between.

Felstead et al. (2005) also take part in this discussion by presenting both sides of being connected anytime, anywhere paradox. First, they present the mobile phone as an enabler, to avoid 'dead times' which are time slots such as travel time between work and home, between meetings, and to enable multitasking during times invested in realizing tasks that don't require total concentration. At this point, cell phones offer its user the opportunity to take use of these otherwise 'dead' time slots by accessing information, being available to others and following up their work matters. However, there is a more negative side of this matter, which has been the centre of discussions in this research area. According to Felstead et al. (2005) it becomes much more difficult to handle the workplace pressure, given that with mobile and wireless technology spatially and timely isolation from work is becoming more complicated. The diminishing of the 'dead time' from travels also destroys these few times that were formerly 'incommunicado' (Felstead et al., 2005: 47) when planes, trains, cars and ferries became remote offices (Kinsman, 1987). Ironically, while cell phone service providers market themselves through their wide service area, the few places left in the world without mobile phone reception and internet connection promote themselves through their nonreachability (Felstead et al., 2005). Data obtained from different research projects conducted on this topic shows that even though users agree that wireless mobile technology improve their lives in terms of flexibility, convenience, connectedness, and having everything within their reach, they state that they find themselves in contradictory situations caused by the same devices (Jarvenpaa & Lang, 2005): the stress of being always available, reachable, technology addiction and constantly working.

In brief, the discussion is set around the tensions between being flexible and being continuously accessible, created by advanced information technologies, which leads to alternate work times and places (Major & Germano, 2006). Of course, as Major and Germano (2006) suggest, "under ideal circumstances" having alternated work schedules would enable employees to have more flexibility and control over their time use and thus

facilitate to manage different domains of their life. Yet, when workers do not choose their own work times (Jarvis, 2005), this flexibility turns into a "non-standard shift" and increases the difficulty of managing work-life demands (Jacobs & Gerson, 2004).

The above discussed dilemma is the tight spot of being available. Scholars who are interested in this area of research agree on the dilemma created by advanced telecommunication technologies in the workplace. While this new technology facilitates and speeds up operations and processes of work, it also calls forth interruptions of non-work life making it difficult for workers to disengage from work when they want and need to (Naswall et al., 2008). This results a tension between flexibility and incessant accessibility (Major & Germano, 2006). Because increased flexibility takes away fixed times and places, in other words distinct boundaries for different tasks, fulfilling the requirements of different roles with full concentration and dedication becomes more difficult: "The new flexibility quietly, but inevitably erases the boundary between work and leisure" (Eriksen, 2001: 127).

### Blurring Boundaries

Having different spaces and times for different activities and different roles of one's life (e.g. home for family time, office for work, hotels for vacation) would constitute very concrete boundaries between work and social life[2]. These boundaries assist individuals in organizing and distinguishing their different roles, positions for each sphere of their life (Olson-Buchanan & Roswell, 2006). Decentralisation of fixed hours and fixed places resulting from the adoption of wireless ICTs first diminished these above mentioned spatial boundaries, leading to a blurring of psychological, temporal and behavioural boundaries. When multitasking became possible and the need to choose between work and family or social life disappeared, boundaries became blurry. Yet according to a general boundary theory (Nippert-Eng, 1996ab), in order to simplify and order their environment, individuals have boundary management strategies (Ashforth et al., 2000). According to these individual strategies, the extent to which various roles are integrated or segmented across different spheres, such as family, work and community, depends on the individual preferences, differences and work requirements (Olson-Buchanan & Roswell, 2006; Kossek et al., 2005).

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[2] In the relevant literature, there is a great body of work dealing with so called 'work-family balance'. Yet, some acknowledge that there are more dimensions and complementary roles in one's life other than just work and family. Thus, especially in more recent work the term 'work-life balance' is used, and will also be employed in the context of this paper.

Clark's (2000) work-family border theory provides a continuum of domains ranging from segmentation to integration. At segmentation point, domains of work and family have idiosyncratic mindsets and are mutually exclusive. Through role segmentation individuals may experience less blurring between and less interruption in their different roles and may be able to "psychologically compartmentalize their identities" (Olson-Buchanan & Roswell, 2006: 435). Negative consequences of segmentation are difficulties to make transitions or "shifting gears" between roles (Ashforth et al., 2000).

At the integration end of the continuum, work and family are integrated into each other and are identical in regards to tasks, emotions and people involved (Clark, 2000; Nippert-Eng, 1996). Role integration is frequently encountered in the academic research. Nippert-Eng describes high role integration as a situation where home and work are fully engaged and there are no distinctions left between "what belongs to 'home' or to 'work'" (Nippert-Eng, 1996b). This is supported by a Weld survey of university staff employees, cited in Olson-Buchanan & Roswell (2006), which states that the higher the role integration is, the fewer are the boundaries set between work and non-work. Employees with higher role integration do not have negative feelings about interruptions and they unreservedly use communication technologies for work during non-work times, resulting as a higher work-non-work conflict. Higher role integrations result in difficulties in creating and maintaining role boundaries (Ashforth et al., 2000). Similar to this perspective, Olson-Buchanan & Roswell's work (2006) focuses on erasing work-non-work boundaries by performing work during non-work times through communication technologies or vice versa.

Clark's aforementioned theory suggests that the degree of segmentation and integration of boundaries between different domains of one's life is closely related to permeability and flexibility level of these boundaries. Permeability is defined by Voydanoff (2008) as "the degree to which elements from one domain enter into another domain" (p.43). In other words, depending on the permeability level of a boundary, one can be psychologically or behaviourally engaged in a different role than the one that one's physically in (Ashforth et al., 2000). Boundary flexibility is similarly defined by Voydanoff (2008) as "the degree to which temporal and spatial boundaries permit role activities to be performed in various settings and at various times, that is, flexibility regarding when and where activities are performed" (p.44). According to Ashforth et al. (2000), the choice for an individual to favour work or non-work roles depends on rewards gained from that role, either extrinsic or intrinsic. Additionally, while symbolic or oral reference to other roles is mostly the case (e.g.

having a family picture on office desk, talking about business at home), it would be the concern of an entirely different study.

Voydanoff (2008) also mentions 'boundary-spanning resources', which focus on how different domains (e.g. work, family, community) link to each other in regards to boundary flexibility. Edwards and Rothbard (2000) identify six frequent linking mechanisms in the research; spill-over, compensation, segmentation, resource drain, congruence and work-family conflict. Yet, of these six, the first three are the most frequently encountered in the literature as dominant models of relationships observed between work and non-work roles. Spillover can be seen as a consequence of the integration model. There are two types of spillover: negative and positive. Positive spillover corresponds to the translation of work satisfaction and stimulation to other domains in form of the same high energy. Negative spillover constitutes simply the negative impacts that work problems have over non-work domains (Roehling et al., 2003). In brief, spillover signifies a course where experiences in one role 'spill over into' and affect the practices (e.g. moods, behaviours, skills) of another role (Rothbard & Dumas, 2006; Roehling et al., 2003; Chesley et al., 2003). Spillover is also associated with the level of role commitment; the more involved one is to a certain role, the more possibility of clash and intrusion one has. For example, because societal norms and gender role socializations suggests that women are more involved with their family role than men are, it is expected that women have more family-to-work spillover than men. However, empirical researches give mixed results for this hypothesis (Roehling et al., 2003).  With the increasing influence of ICTs in peoples' lives, some research reveals that employees who use different ICTs outside the workplace are more likely to report negative spillover of work into non-work domains (Galinsky et al., 2001). Spillover is the most common relationship that work and non-work roles have.

The second most dominant model, compensation, indicates people's attempts to make up for inadequacies, insufficiencies or dissatisfactions in one role by showing greater effort and greater commitment in another role. In this case, work and non-work are negatively correlated (Rothbard & Dumas, 2006; Roehling et al., 2003).

Finally the third most dominant model is the aforementioned segmentation which presents a separation of work and non-work without one role influencing the other. Originally, this model used to be seen as "the natural division" of work and non-work as a result of formal separation between the two in terms of space and time. However, as stated before, this

natural separation is no longer the case. Therefore, in more recent studies, the segmentation model has been redefined as "an active psychological process whereby people may choose to maintain a boundary between work and family" (Rothbard & Dumas, 2006: 74). In brief this model is a personal compartmentalization of work and non-work which provides an independency of experiences of different domains (Roehling et al., 2003).

"The expectation that one should be available as a potentially working person at any time is an important dimension of new work"; as a result, work wins the race to dominate individuals' lives (Eriksen, 2001: 127).

Some authors advise individuals to create more concrete boundaries between their work and non-work lives. Eriksen (2001) suggest a labour contract which ensures that every employee has the right of being offline for one month a year, excluding vacations and the right to not answer work e-mails outside of office hours. More suggestions in individual level aim to help employees attain segmentation through specific decisions for where and when to ignore work related calls and e-mails (Eriksen, 2001; Olson-Buchanan & Roswell, 2006).

In the literature concerning psychological boundaries and boundary management, there is an inescapable body of work dealing with identity navigation issues. However due to the limited scope of this research, this issue will not be further investigated.

**CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY**

ICTs are intensively diffused and embedded in lives of most of the twenty-first century individuals residing in developed countries and are no longer merely used for work. This use of the same mobile and wireless ICTs for work and non-work purposes led to a trespassing of boundaries between these different spheres. Being connected to work during non-work times through these ICTs provides a new territory to examine the flexibility paradox on an individual level and how individuals handle the disappearance of boundaries, and in what ways, if any, they create self-set boundaries.

This study investigates the blurring of boundaries between work and non-work life, through an ICT enabled flexibility lens. The specific ICT focused on in this research is the BlackBerry, which is a new generation smartphone, combining cell phone and laptop features. It is

theorized in this study that the simultaneous use of this device for work and non-work organizations weaken boundaries between these two, resulting in a complete integration. The hypotheses that will be investigated for this purpose are thus as follows:

H1: BlackBerry use causes spillover between work and non-work roles.

H2: BlackBerry use reduces detachment from work .

H3: BlackBerry use will increase job stress.

H4: BlackBerry use makes users more efficient.

H5: BlackBerry use increases users' working hours.

## 2. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The research method is designed to test the above presented hypotheses and to offer information about BlackBerry users' perception of their own use and the behavioural and boundary blurring effects of the device. To date, research concerning the organizational and behavioural effects of ICTs employed both quantitative and qualitative methods. Given that the purpose of this study is to reveal an understanding of BlackBerry users' perception of non-work life boundaries being trespassed by work and that the subject is the focus, the most relevant research method to follow seems to be 'talking with the subject': interviewing.

### JUSTIFICATION OF THE RESEARCH STRATEGY

"If you want to know how people understand their world and their life, why not talk with them?" asks Kvale (1996) on the first line of his book *Interviewing.* He describes qualitative interviewing as an attempt to "understand the world from the subjects' points of view, to unfold the meaning of peoples' experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations" (p.1), through the language of the target population (Gaskell, 2000). In other words, interviews tend to be essentially individual and try to reveal what cannot be seen through a direct observation by regarding respondents as meaning makers (Patton, 1980; Warren, 2002). Quantitative methods were also considered in the early stages of this study. Although quantitative data would be helpful to obtain numbers and percentages related and compare the uses of different groups (Bulmer, 1984), it would not provide users' personal opinions, experiences, and perceptions. Thus this approach has been rejected. Qualitative interviews, on the other hand, due to the personal nature of the dialogue, provide significant details about every respondent's experiences, (Berger, 1998), which constitute the essence of this study. Although a combination of both would lead to a deeper analysis, qualitative analysis will be used exclusively due to the limited scope of this study.

A mix of interviewing approaches including semi-structured qualitative face-to-face interviewing, semi-structured qualitative internet interviewing and structured e-mail interviewing has been used in order to reach as many respondents as possible and consequently to increase the sample size.

The term internet interviewing is used in a wide range of contexts, sometimes as an umbrella term to describe all types of *computer mediated communication* (Mann & Stewart,

2002). For the scope of this research, 'internet interviewing' will correspond to real-time qualitative interviewing whereas e-mail interviewing will be regarded only as structured questions that are sent to and received from respondents via e-mail. In both types of interviews, computer mediated communication reduces the impracticalities that researchers would otherwise come across on a face-to-face research (Mann & Stewart, 2002). This method enables researchers to conduct 'asynchronous' or real time interviews with respondents from different cities, and different countries without the constraints of time differences (see also Markham, 1998). It also helps "to maintain day-by-day contact throughout the course of the work" while also allowing respondents to participate to a project form their own places of work or their home (Mann & Stewart, 2002: 605). This being said, one disadvantage of having an interview on a virtual space, as also encountered by Markham (1998) during her online interview study, is that respondents are not always as reliable to their online appointments as to real life ones. During the course of conducting the real-time online interviews, there have been many occasions where the researcher waited online at the agreed-upon time, but the respondent did not show up until very late. Yet, after meeting with the respondent, carrying out real-time online interviews were much smoother than expected. Since the researcher and most of the online-interviewed respondents were familiar with the culture of chatting, the conversations were not uncomfortable but very natural, casual and felt like speaking, unlikely to Markham's experiences where she was foreign to the online culture and had difficulties with coping with the speed and the sometimes simultaneous nature of conversations.

Furthermore, the validity of the Internet assisted selection process varies depending on the research subject. Thus, this methodological step may not be suitable for research regarding other populations. As this study's population consists of technique affine individuals this concern for digital divide among potential interviewees or exclusion of some groups from the population can be disregarded.

E-mail interviewing is defined as structured quantitative interviewing in the literature (Leeuw, 2008) due to the lack of direct interaction. Structured interviews are standardized questions that are given to every respondent in the same way. It is most commonly used to facilitate the comparison and compartmentalization of answers (Bryman, 2004). For the purposes of this study, structured interview guides were sent to interviewees through e-mail, in order to grasp and compare attitudes of users from different fields of work towards BlackBerry devices. Due to its limitations this type of interviewing was only used as a pilot research tool

and helped to identify the target population. Although the questions were structured there was an amount of flexibility in terms of responses. All of the questions were open-ended, and thus let the interviewees share their views with their own words leading to a less quantitative character for the method used. Also, working with digital data that is digitally stored (Mann & Stewart, 2002) reduced the time spent on transcription and the chance of making transcription errors as Poland (2002) highlights as important. Similarly, transcription errors were avoided during real time internet interviews.

E-mail interviews, although have their advantages, cannot provide detailed information as would qualitative interviews. Therefore, additionally, four face-to-face qualitative interviews and six real-time internet interviews were conducted within a semi-structured form, with the former also allowing the researcher to see respondents' body language, facial expressions, especially within the focus of this present study, their interaction with their BlackBerry while on a different social setting.

## METHODOLOGICAL PROGRESS

### *Questionnaire and Topic Guide Design*

After an extensive review of relevant academic literature and several articles (e.g. newspapers, internet forums, and websites) an interview guide was created. Questions were divided into two subsections gradually building from daily activities and technology use to more specific questions about BlackBerry use. The first set of questions were to find out about respondents' daily life: their work hours, places of work, non-work activities, the way they conduct their business, in terms of using computer mediated devices as opposed to face-to-face relations with clients, co-workers and bosses. Finally, the second section was constituted of questions specifically about their degree of Blackberry use. E-mail interviews were conducted as a pilot research, with four BlackBerry users from different backgrounds, known to the researcher. Subsequently, the guide was slightly revised, adding questions about weekend activities and commute to work. Furthermore, pilot research also revealed that the experience of blurred boundaries through BlackBerry use was highly dependent on the sector. One user from a risk management firm and one self-employed goldsmith denoted that they didn't experience any more or less flexibility or more work after they started using a BlackBerry, whereas a self-employed internet site owner was very excited to talk about how he felt that he no longer has non-work time since using a BlackBerry, so was a young

employee from a public relations company. Being one of the factors of the changing work nature, service industry workers were the most interesting for the scope of this study as they are required to be always available and reachable. This pilot study also revealed that managers from any sector experience more work with their use of BlackBerry. In order to limit the work fields of the sample, the interviewees of this research were thus selected in regards to their employment in service industry.

### Sampling – Selection of Interviewees

Interviewees[3] were reached through a snowball process, starting from researcher's acquaintances. As Warren (2002) defines, snowball process is carried with one or two respondents reached by the researcher, who comply with the sample's requirements, referring others through their social or work networks. This practice increased the participants' willingness to help as well as the trustworthiness of the researcher. Internet interviewees are composed of the employees from a public relations firm located in Istanbul, Turkey. Four face-to-face interview respondents all reside in London and are acquaintances of the researcher. Both male and female respondents were interviewed but no specific gender comparisons have been made.

Conducting interviews with a control group (i.e. non BlackBerry users) has been considered in order to test the causal hypotheses. Yet, due to the limited scope of the research and time constraints this was not possible. However, respondents were asked to compare their present experiences with their 'before-BlackBerry' experiences, and this way it is attempted to have a 'self-reflective control group'.

### Data Collection Procedure

To conduct the pilot study, the topic guide document was turned into open questions and was sent to respondents whom the researcher had contacted in advance. During face-to-face interviews and real-time internet interviews the topic guide was used to provide guidance yet left room for flexibility. In either case, the first contact with respondents was made through e-mail, and it was useful to see that most of the respondents answered from their BlackBerry.

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[3] Please see Appendix I for a table of interviewees.

For the purposes of this study, face-to-face interviews with four people were conducted and lasted between thirty and forty five minutes. Two of those took place at coffee shops whereas the other two were realized at the respondents' residence. Two of the interviewees are partners, working in the same consultancy firm. Initially it was planned to interview them both separately. However, due to time constraints that the couple had, the interview could only be conducted simultaneously. This was more of an advantage than a disadvantage. It revealed many important insights, significant details and also a chance to observe a couple's interaction with each other and with their work, and how they set their own boundaries in their lives. This was especially interesting, given that the couple works together, lives together and both are owners of a BlackBerry.

All of the face-to-face interviews were recorded digitally then transcribed into a text file. To conduct the internet interviews, after the initial contact, an appointment that is appropriate for both the researcher and the respondent was agreed upon. These interviews were conducted via *MSN Messenger* with employees from Turkey and they took place on Saturday mornings and weekday evenings and lasted approximately half an hour. All of the data gathered from the interviews were then translated if necessary and categorized by topic, questions and viewpoints.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH AND LIMITATIONS**

Based on the results of this study, future research may apply a quantitive analysis to a wider range of different types of workers in order to compare differences of use between age, gender, familial status, work field, and job description. Interviewees may be chosen following this quantitative data. Also, as suggested by Williams et al. (1988), it is more useful to carry out a triangulation of different research methods in order to achieve valid conclusions on a new media issue, akin to this study which is concerned with the use of a modern ICT. Therefore, additionally, future research may include user diaries[4] to offer more precise and individual data. For this study, diary surveys which provide an individual record of activities were considered, yet no respondent has agreed to collaborate due to time pressures. Alternatively, detailed phone bills were sought, but again rejected due to their fairly personal nature. Furthermore, the bills were usually addressed to firms in order to sort out business and personal calls and make payments.

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[4] User diaries would provide the data about the amount of use that is even beyond the conscious of the user.

## 3. INTERPRETATION OF THE FINDINGS

Interviewees spoke very specifically about why, how and how much they use their BlackBerry devices, therefore presenting a conscious and active decision concerning their use. Most reasons encountered that provoked them to acquire a BlackBerry were to increase their control over work, be aware of emergencies, improve communication with work and family while away on business, and in some cases, their employers' requirement to use this particular device. For example, a media consultant (YM) explained: "*I travel a lot for business and most of my time is spent outside the office. I bought a BlackBerry in order to secure communication.* The reason why this interviewee decided to have a BlackBerry instead of a regular cell phone is his heavier use of e-mail in his communication with work, friends and even his mother. This example demonstrates a situation in which this ICT is voluntarily purchased to facilitate the management of both work and social life. For some, the device was given by their firm as a result of a promotion. Interviewees in this position were not sure if this was an award or a way to get more work out of them. Respondents had mixed feelings about this device. While some were very content of receiving e-mails anywhere, some illustrated decisions aimed at limiting the use and influence of this device in their lives. One of the client representatives in a PR company (IT) declared "*I try not to check my e-mails on it (the BlackBerry) on the weekends and on holidays. I need some time away from work and this is almost impossible with a BlackBerry. I repent ever getting one.*" Yet, she had to admit that no matter what, she wouldn't be able to quit it. The essence of many responses highlight that there is a love and hate relationship between BlackBerry and its user which has begat from the flexibility paradox.

## NEED FOR FLEXIBILITY

As supported throughout the interviews, new working environment resulted in fragmented projects rather than fixed tasks, a change in the nature of family, a more information dominated and rapidly changing environment. When time is of great importance, it is crucial to have everything within the reach and to be flexible in order to reach everything instantly. Modern ICTs offered solutions to this necessity, connecting everyone via networks, while at the same time increasing the accessibility. This study is concerned with one particular ICT, the BlackBerry, and aims to discuss in this section how users perceive their relationship to this device.

The most problematic side of using a BlackBerry is the constant availability that it offers and the addiction that it causes. In social conversations, daily articles, even by its users the device is usually referred to as "Crackberry". Yet this is not the first ICT that caused an addiction to a certain degree. There is a vast body of literature discussing the addictive characteristic of the Internet and the cell phones. Given that BlackBerry to some extent conjoins a cell phone, an internet accessed computer, a calendar, and a diary, seeing how it triggers an addiction is beyond surprise; *"Oh you wouldn't even know where you were going if you'd lost your BlackBerry!"* is what DG said to his girlfriend BA during our couple interview.

### Choosing Always Availability

Most of the interviewees affirmed that they bought their BlackBerries themselves, if not given by the firm. Despite this, a very surprising data came to light when BA and DG talked about some co-workers from different departments of their firm who simply declined to get a BlackBerry offered to all employees. This rejection is thought to be the result of a cynical view that perceives BlackBerry and similar smartphones as *modern shackles* that control the life of employees, forcing them to work constantly by making them available and accessible. Although this concern is a mainstream view, there is some truth in it which emerges from the discomfort uttered by user interviewees.

Different personal motives that trigger the purchase are centred on a common theme; to be able to have more control over work and to be aware of emergencies in an instant. The need to be informed of everything right at the moment reveals the most important characteristic of this newly emerged society: *rapid change* which requires *instantaneity* that is defined by Bauman (2000a) as a crucial characteristic of modernity[5]. A client representative in a PR firm (IT) declares: *"It has had very positive effects in my work life. When you have one of these you don't miss anything, you're much faster and efficient."* Furthermore, behind this necessity there are various factors which can be linked to the new global and service based work conditions. Travelling very frequently for business is one motive, trying to take advantage of the dead time spent in traffic is another;

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[5] Bauman describes this era of modernity as "liquid modernity". For further detail see Bauman (2000), *Liquid Modernity.*

> *"I use the time much more effectively. In a city like Istanbul, I spend three hours a day in traffic. I got a BlackBerry to cover this empty time. At least I can put this time to good account thanks to my BlackBerry." (BAk)*

Times that were previously considered as transition times (e.g. the commute from work to home was considered as a transition from work to home) are now seen as dead times and tried to turn to account by the use of wireless ICTs for getting work done through phone calls or e-mails.

It is undeniable that nowadays, as also stressed by interviewees; most of the communications, both work-related and social, are carried out through e-mail. Extensive use of e-mail took BlackBerry one step further from regular cell phones in terms of availability. Many interviewees specified that they use the e-mail or messenger options of the device more than they use it as a cell phone. Subsequently, the most useful feature of the device uttered by all the interviewees is its "direct push technology" which informs the user as soon as an e-mail is received, whereas checking e-mails on a cell phone or even on a computer requires a sign-in process as well as an idea that an email may have arrived. This on many levels saves time in the busy work day; DG declared, *"It's been a very long time since I went to the office, turned on my computer and had new e-mails waiting to be read".* Instead, he reads them the night before or on the way to work which enables him to plan his answers, and as soon as he's at the office, he can start answering those e-mails, if not before on his BlackBerry. Yet, this defining technological feature at the same time makes it very difficult to not check e-mails on social situations. Almost all of the interviewees mentioned that "the blinking red light"[6] simply couldn't be ignored. Technology in a sense almost obviates users having control over the frequency of dealing with work related issues in non-work settings or vice versa.

Another alluring advantage of the device is its ability to presents computer based documents or spread sheets, which turns it into a small laptop. One of the interviewees mentioned that this was a dominant reason why her firm decided to get BlackBerries.

> *"One of us travels a lot to Australia, Japan, Canada... He's all over... He always had one. We got one each as a result of one person being in holiday, something going wrong with a spreadsheet and people trying to text him. Of course he didn't understand because didn't see the sheet, only received all those tiny numbers and*

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[6] BlackBerry device has a light setting which notifies the user by a blinking red light when a message or an e-mail is received.

*letters. He said we need to be in contact like this in case something important comes up." (JM)*

This device also has a symbolic function. YM explains this aspect of having a BlackBerry as "being in Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle*"; meaning that some people want to show off their BlackBerry, their availability, how busy they are and thus their commitment to their work. Gambles et al. (2006) report what's behind this same issue on their book, arguing;

> "Especially among professionals and managers, ideal workers are regarded as those who demonstrate 'commitment' in terms of long hours and exclusive dedication to the job. In many contexts, in other forms of work, where unpaid overtime is not expected, ideal workers nevertheless tend to be regarded as those who work full-time, intensively, and do not modify work for family or other reasons" (p.45-46).

In relation to this, social networks also influence the adoption of BlackBerry. For some of the interviewees a friend's use was the reason to obtain a BlackBerry. This fact reminds of Eriksen's statement; "complete availability is contagious" (2001:127). According to him, in order to keep the competitive advantage, those (individuals or firms) who begin to be always available are followed by others (Eriksen, 2001). BlackBerry ownership and use become a status symbol within a work environment where being busy is a virtue.

### Effects of BlackBerry in Constantly Working

Although facilitating coordination, BlackBerry does not seem to have as many advantages for social and family life as for work life. These sentences of a public relations employee who also has a small child  explain it all:

> *It [the BlackBerry] offers so many advantages for my work life. I'm more coordinated, I don't miss anything, I'm much more efficient and fast, I can reach everything. But it causes problems in my personal life. I can't even count the times when my loved ones told me to drop that thing!" (SC)*

The nature of the service industry workers' tasks requires a great amount of flexibility. As indicated by many interviewees (YM, DG, BA, SC, IT), they usually work on several different projects for several clients. The working hours and the intensity of the work therefore depend on the client and the project. They indicate that they no longer have fixed working hours or days, and because the sector is based on 'service', clients usually demand to be able to reach them anytime of the day, any day of the week. Many of the respondents

floundered to specifically indicate how many hours a week they work in and outside the office.

> "I guess it's about 45 to 50 hours a week in the office. But it really depends. If we have some big report to deliver, we work until midnight for seven days a week. But that happens for a very short period of time. Other times it can be fairly relaxing. Sometimes I just work from home. It really varies." (DG)

> "Oh, I really can't say... The official working hour in my company is from 9:00 am to 6:00 pm. But that usually turns into nine to ten hours a day. And out of office, as soon as I get an e-mail I check it on my BlackBerry and do the necessary calls or orientations. On the weekends, I work at least three hours to follow up news. In our sector even when you read your Sunday paper, you see some news about a client; make a call and all of a sudden you find yourself working." (BAk)

These two examples present the lack of a concrete system of working hours in the service industry. Having worked in such conditions before starting to use a BlackBerry provokes our interviewees to talk more about its advantages compared to before. Responses differ depending on the interviewees, yet, as effects of the device, being more flexible, feeling freer were more prevalent than feeling more constraint or working nonstop.

> "I feel freer. It's a relief to know beforehand whether or not I need to go back to the office once I leave." (BAk)

> "Before I started using this, I had to sit around and wait until the end of the day in case something comes up. Or in case of urgencies, I couldn't move from my desk waiting for a call or an e-mail. Now I can handle most of the tasks wherever I am, the BlackBerry enables me to multitask. This way I spend these times that I used to waste with my family or for myself."(YB)

These statements reveal that workers are happier with having a portable office and being able to control their work remotely rather than being chained up to office desktop. On the other hand a rather negative view about the device suggests that it makes users work more:

> "Actually, I think this device doesn't have anything to do with freedom or flexibility. It just adds at least 3 hours of more work to your daily office hours, it makes you work

more. It is perfect for those who are perfectionist and obsessive about their work." (IT)

An answer that probably summarizes it all is that of YM who has used a BlackBerry for two years and has quit using it eight months ago:

*"For the first couple of months you feel much more flexible. But after a while, you realize how much you get addicted and dependent on it, and that you're never disconnected. [...] never disconnected from the system. I used to feel like I was living in a matrix where. Everything is in that matrix, business, leisure, entertainment, family... I no longer had my personal space."*

These different views also symbolize the technological paradox that forms a vicious circle between the advantages of flexibility and constraints of always availability.

Furthermore, many respondents brought up that they are more organized with the date book function of the device reminding meetings and important notes.

## BOUNDARY MANAGEMENT

One of the important indicators of the diminishing boundaries between work and non-work is being always reachable. When it is possible to get work calls on the weekends, in the evenings and on yearly absence leaves, it gets more and more difficult to detach from and not think about work outside of office hours. One interviewee explained her feelings remembering how she used to perceive working when she was in school: *"I thought working was going to be so much better, because once you're out of office, you're done; you don't have any homework or exams to study for at home. How wrong was I?!"* (IT).

Nowadays, it is almost impossible to not be able to reach someone any time of any day, especially if the person is a BlackBerry user. Thus, owning a BlackBerry consequently increases the pressure of being available. Being a BlackBerry owner has thus dominant social codes and responsibilities as indicated by another client director from a PR company;

*"I feel that I am seen as always available. Everyone can reach me anytime! So, I feel like I am obliged to answer every e-mail that I receive. Because they know I have a*

*BlackBerry I can't pretend that I didn't check my e-mails for couple of days, and I feel like it's disrespectful if I don't answer. So I always have this feeling that I must answer!" (YB)*

This statement signifies the unwritten contract that employees sign with their work and social networks when they purchase a BlackBerry. Owning one of these devices has a social meaning that suggests "I am able to check my e-mails no matter where; you can easily reach me." This assertion is agreed upon by a manager interviewee's statement, which has a more positive sense;

*"It's good to know for people, for work or business, that they can always reach me through e-mail. This is also a comforter for me. I always send e-mails to my acquaintances that have a BlackBerry to guarantee reaching them." (EC)*

During the interviews, most of the above mentioned work-non-work linking mechanisms were encountered[7]. If these boundary management strategies are seen on an axis with integration and segmentation ends, it can be argued that segmentation is difficult to realize for these users as they organize and control different aspects of their lives through the same device. BlackBerry is used for both social and work relations, and it offers the same flexibility for all relationships. One interviewee mentioned her custom of turning her BlackBerry off during dinner, and how this impeded for her friends to reach her in order to meet later that evening. Because BlackBerry is not a device that is completely dedicated to work and is also used as a cell phone, it is difficult to ignore or turn it off for many users. This results in being always reachable and consequently puts pressure on workers to keep it on and to answer incoming calls and e-mails right away which is the most determining element of "constant working".

*"You simply don't turn it off. People think since I have a BlackBerry, I will answer them right away, and if I don't, they'll think there's something wrong, either about the business or with me. This is especially the case in specific jobs like mine[8]. It isn't perceived well if your cell phone is off. And because I like my job, I didn't fight*

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[7] Yet, in order to reveal the level of compensation between work and nonwork life of BlackBerry users, a deeper psychological research is required, and thus, for the purposes of this study, no distinctive data was obtained concerning compensation levels.

[8] YM is a media consultant. Please see appendix I for a list of interviewee professions.

*against this view that suggests 'your customers should be able to reach you anytime'."(YM)*

The integration model was the most commonly encountered throughout the interviews. Surprisingly enough, for most of the respondents, integration of work and non-work activities was perceived merely natural, and was not even questioned. Most of them had very high integration with very few boundaries, thus, high role permeability. The senior manager of the interviewed PR company reveals; *"My job is my life style. So I can say that I always work, in order to enhance my vision." (CN)* This statement is a very strong example to having no clear cut boundaries between work and non-work life. It can be said that for this interviewee's case BlackBerry is not a boundary eraser, but an enabler to coordinate this complex lifestyle.

Especially in service industries, the study reveals that employees have high role permeability. Liking the job and therefore trying to fulfil its requirements is a dominantly encountered reason. Although the sample size was relatively small, the data obtained from the study can lead to the argument that service industry workers and high level managers from other industries mostly tend to have high work-non-work integration as a result of personal choice. DG was one of the interviewees with very high work-non-work integration. He explained this as a result of loving to work.

> *"It's probably because of the job we do, but partly the fact that we're given the freedom to choose how we actually achieve the work. Say, I know a lot of people that when they go to office that's when they work, and when they leave the office they can stay out of work. I would be one of the people that like to work when off to work, rather than thinking "I've got to do this from 9 to 5". So, yeah it's just my own personal choice. Some people just do the work while at the office, if they've got work to do. I don't feel guilty about going back home or doing something which is for me rather than my office in what would be working hours. I don't get worried about getting my work done; I can do it out of office". (DG)*

### Self-set Boundaries

When there are few boundaries between work and non-work activities, spillover is inevitable. Throughout the interviews, negative spillover was mentioned more frequently than positive spillover. Yet, according to interviews, it is argued that although having high role integration is a personal choice, it doesn't necessarily mean that it is always welcome. A very commonly occurring theme was receiving work calls or emails during non-work times, especially on holidays and the weekends.  Some expressed that they try to maintain certain boundaries whereas for some being on call was a part of the job as denoted again by the senior manager of the PR firm:

> *"I always try to answer every mail and call I receive no matter where or when. Given that I'm working in the service industry, the contrary cannot be thought of." (CN)*

As a result of the emotional contract mentioned above, very few BlackBerry users can bring themselves to turn the device off, and even fewer employees refuse to have one to begin with. Hence, even attempts to set boundaries in order to have non-work time involve limited use rather than no use.

> *"I answer all the calls and emails I receive right away. Although, on my last vacation couple things bothered me, so I think I'll take some precautions for the next one... Like telling my clients and co-workers that I will be on vacation and tell them to reduce their expectancies from me! But I don't think I can turn it off... Just in case an emergency comes up... The problem is not working while on vacation, but when you're frustrated by a work related issue, you can't enjoy your vacation." (SC)*

This quote also exemplifies that the majority of interviewees is not bothered by working even during their vacations. Their life being centred around their work is internalized and not seen as a problem what so ever.

Also, BlackBerry puts an extra responsibility on its users. Knowing that they *are* able to keep track of things, they simply cannot ignore incoming work calls or e-mails even in non-work situations. Interviews also revealed that work issues are usually on employees' minds. Setting a boundary as "I will read the e-mail but will not respond to it", is a very evident

characteristic of this type of workers. Briefly, inconsistent with expectations, no respondent could confidently articulate specific times or activities (including holidays, weekends, child's school activities etc.) where they deliberately ignore work related calls or e-mails. The responses suggested that most of the interviewees, at least *try* to check those calls and e-mails, even if they are not in a position to address them. Most also express that e-mail use is more frequent than phone calls, which facilitates the use even in situations where phone calls are not appropriate such as in public spaces or public transportation. As suggested by Felstead et al. (2005), these spaces require a temporary sharing with strangers and e-mail or messenger use rather than phone call is much more convenient.

### Who's in Control?

One of the cynical metaphors used to define BlackBerry devices is *modern shackles.* This on-going debate, which also is one of the hypotheses of this study, suggests that these devices lead users to work extra hours than non-users and threaten boundaries between work and non-work life. Literature, however, suggests that individual characteristics and job types have a great effect on how people manage their working hours and their boundaries. This view is also strenghtened by the data required from the interviews. While every interviewee is aware of the need to *"control the device"*, only some are confident for realizing it.

> *"Being always reachable can be very irritating on some occasions. You might not be in working mood in the weekend. You might have personal problems and might not want to think or care about anything else. During office hours, you need to be dedicated to your work, but not necessarily on the weekends. In such situations, I usually turn off my phone. This is the only way for me to spend some time for myself. It can be restrictive to be open to reach of many people."* (YB)

Nonetheless, it can be argued that neither users have control over BlackBerry nor BlackBerry has control over users; the control exercised is from the new work ethic where human being becomes inferior to human doing. BA uses an original metaphor for the device, comparing it to a tamagotchi[9]. *"You always need to feed the tamagotchi or it'll die."* However, in this setting what will die is not the BlackBerry, but the work relations, social relations, the

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[99] Tamagotchis are handheld digital pets that need constant care.

projects and networks. The device brings them all together creating a common space that represents individual responsibilities for different domains of one's life.

### Do BlackBerry Users Get Vacation?

This inability to ignore the device's signals change the very meaning of vacation. As presented above, there is almost no escape from work since the worker is connected to work 24-7. Thus, although it can cause anxiety during work times, for many, having no cell phone reception during vacations is the real relaxation.

> "I don't usually turn off or ignore my BlackBerry. I bought this device to be able to be reachable and do work on the move. Although, on annual leave this year, I can't disguise that I was really happy to be at places where I didn't have any reception" (IT)

> "I had to go to Dubai pretty frequently for work. By then Turkcell[10] didn't get reception for BlackBerry in Dubai. At first I was really annoyed, kept calling them and raising hell... But then, I remember, that it was the only place I felt peaceful!" (YM)

These citations delineate the flavour of many other responses, emphasizing also the personal paradox of this technology about having control over availability. While every respondent highlighted the importance of keeping the device on to *have everything within their reach,* they also wish for some time away from everything, which seemingly they no longer can have. However, we see from our interviewees that they do not feel comfortable setting boundaries between their work and non-work. Being flexible and reachable is mostly perceived as an advantage at many levels, and an enabler to use time more efficiently.

One can argue that in this case those workers do not have any leisure time. Yet, it is seen that although it isn't completely detached from work, they do have leisure. This reminds us of Clayre's claims, which suggest that "if the work is monotonous, the leisure can be monotonous also" (Clayre, 1974: 213), arguing that unsatisfying and monotonous work will be spilled-over into leisure time, whereas demanding jobs can allow more enjoyable leisure. The findings of this study confirm these statements. Our interviewees, who all work in very

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[10] A big Turkish telecommunications company and cell phone service provider.

demanding fields of work, and work most of the time, stated that they were very much satisfied with their social lives.

The other interesting finding of the study was that none of the interviewees stated that they have clear cut work and non-work times or places, yet they were not bothered by this. When given a choice, both women and men, especially those with young children, prefer more flexibility at work and more time at home. When the option is available, most workers take advantage of the opportunity to work outside the office and vary the length of their working day. Yet, having an office is still indispensable. Some respondents consider this as an issue of discipline, some as an issue of concentration. But they all agree that it is a great opportunity to be able to work wherever they feel more productive.

It may be true that non BlackBerry users work less. But it cannot be argued that the non users do not think about work as much as BlackBerry users. In this sense, this device can be perceived as a device that decreases anxiety of having work out of reach. This study, hence, shows that it is not the BlackBerry that makes users work constantly; it is the work conditions that require them to work constantly. As one of the interviewees states;

> *"My addiction is to Internet, not to BlackBerry itself. But since Blackberry has a great system that is always connected to the Internet, it facilitates my life in many levels. I have a very busy work life, with business travels and meetings. I organize my social and work life through e-mail. That's why every time I see my BlackBerry I check my e-mails and conduct necessary directives no matter where or when." (EC)*

In conclusion, after discussing the findings of the study thoroughly, it is revealed that hypotheses 1, 2 and 4 are confirmed; BlackBerry use does cause spillover between work and non-work domains, reduces detachment from work, yet, makes users more efficient. However, hypotheses 3 and 5 which affirm that BlackBerry use will increase job stress and users' working hours respectively have not been confirmed.

## 4. CONCLUSION

Today, BlackBerry signifies more than a mobile phone with Internet access. There are Hollywood parties for the launch of the newest model, while at the same time this device is perceived as more 'professional' than its closest competitor, iPhone. Although it is not yet widely diffused, the influence that this device has on its users and on their social interactions is hard to ignore. However, academic research has not yet focused on the complete availability and accessibility offered by this device and similar smartphones. As stated by Eriksen; "This era came about so fast that the best research still consists in trying to catch up with the present" (Eriksen, 2001: 5).

This research is an exploratory analysis of the boundary blurring effects of BlackBerry use. Throughout the study, BlackBerry is seen as a device that constantly connects users to their work due to the e-mail service provided. It is taken as a starting point that BlackBerry users have no excuse for being not available in the eyes of those who try to reach them. The cost of being more efficient, more accessible, connected to loved ones and informed of emergencies instantly is paid by being constantly connected to work and experiencing work spillover into non-work domains. This study aimed to test commonly perceived hypotheses of the cynical views concerning the effect of BlackBerry in increased job stress and job dependency, and work spillover into non-work causing an "always working impression".

The data obtained from this study suggests that experiences concerning blurry boundaries, work pressures and the feeling of constant work are very much related to job task characteristics as well as personal characteristics of the users. It is revealed that for the sample of this study, the employees are more likely to report advantages and facilities is that they experienced through their BlackBerry than work stress or threatening of privacy. The study shows that users, once they choose to be a one, are not bothered by work spilling over into their non-work lives. The most common reason for possessing a BlackBerry was declared by the interviewees to be the desire to be able to connect to work anytime, anywhere.

The results of this study however, are limited in its sample and relatively small scope. Yet, by revealing the general characteristics of a phenomenon, it is hoped that these findings provide guidance for future, more focused studies. Comparison between different job types,

gender, age and length of use is left to future analysis that will use quantitative and qualitative methods together, with a wider sample.

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## APPENDIX I – Table of Interviewees

| NAME | PROFESSION | AGE | LENGTH OF BLACKBERRY USE | PURCHASE REASON | TYPE OF INTERVIEW |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Beth Ahlering **(BA)** | Management Consultant | 34 | 2 years | Given by firm | Face-to-face semi-structured interview |
| Dom Gibbeson **(DG)** | Management Consultant | 35 | 2 years | Given by firm | Face-to-face semi-structured interview |
| Jillian Monaghan **(JM)** | Works at financial services company | 25 | 2 months | Given by firm | Face-to-face semi-structured interview |
| Yusuf Muftuoglu **(YM)** | Media Consultant | 32 | 2 years / quit using 8 months ago | Self-purchase | Face-to-face semi-structured interview |
| Canan Noyan **(CN)** | Senior Manager PR Company | 49 | 6 Months | Self-purchase | Real-time Internet interview |
| Bengu Akın **(BAk)** | Account Executive PR Company | 34 | 6 Months | Self-purchase | Real-time Internet interview |
| Irem Tuncay **(IT)** | Account Executive PR Company | 35 | 6 Months | Self-purchase | Real-time Internet interview |
| Yasemin Bayraktar **(YB)** | Account Executive PR Company | 24 | 1.5 Years | Self-purchase | Real-time Internet interview |
| Sule Cerit **(SC)** | Account Executive PR Company | 39 | 5 Months | Self-purchase | Real-time Internet interview |
| Ersin Caglar **(EC)** | Senior Manager in Electronic Security Systems Company | 34 | 1 Year | Given by firm | Real-time Internet interview |
| Figen Özer | Account Executive in Electronic Security Systems Company | 24 | 8 Months | Self-purchase | Structured e-mail interview |

| Berkan Ozcelik | Goldsmith | 23 | 7 Months | Self-purchase | Structured e-mail interview |
| Yorgo Teoderidis | IT Consultant | 31 | 2 Years | Given by firm | Structured e-mail interview |
| Melis Buyuksoy | Risk Consultant | 25 | 9 Months | Given by firm | Structured e-mail interview |

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