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# Freedom or Bondage?: Flexible and Permeable Boundaries in Academic and Professional Careers

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Modern workers ostensibly enjoy unprecedented freedom in scheduling work hours, choosing where to work (home or in the office), and child-care options. This freedom is often greater among academics and other highly educated knowledge workers, and is facilitated by technological tools such as smart phones, low-cost videoconferencing and file-sharing. These factors of modern work relate to central concepts in scholarly research on the work-home boundary: flexibility and permeability. Flexible boundaries can be moved, for example changing one's work start and ending times, or the location of work. Permeable boundaries allow employees located in one domain to engage in another domain, for example, having a telephone conversation with family members while at work. Whereas the freedom associated with flexible and permeable boundaries is often welcome among employees, it is also accompanied by a sense of never being able to escape work, and the burden of greater expectations of availability to do work. In this paper, I highlight recent research findings addressing the complex connection between technological advances and work-life "balance", consider the importance of decoupling boundary permeability from flexibility, and propose future research directions that may help us understand how to enjoy the benefits of modern workplace technology, while avoiding the potential pitfalls.