

# Staying Connected: New Study Finds Cellphones Are Interfering With Family Life

By Marilyn Gardner

The Christian Science Monitor

In the stress-management classes Debbie Mandel teaches, parents often tell her about their struggles to combine work and home. Ranking high on their list of challenges is the cellphone.

"Most of the complaints are about how it intrudes on their home life," says Ms. Mandel, of Lawrence, N.Y. "They get called in the middle of the night. The phone is always ringing about minute issues. They ask me, 'How do we deal with that?'"

It's a question on many people's minds these days. A study in the December issue of the Journal of Marriage and Family finds that cellphones and pagers interfere with family life by bringing job worries and problems home. Interviews with working couples - many with children - revealed that cellphone use tends to decrease family satisfaction and increase distress. "People felt they couldn't turn them off," says Noelle Chesley, a sociologist at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, who conducted the study. "I couldn't find evidence of benefits."

Although cellphones give workers the illusion of staying connected with both employers and family members, Mandel often sees a different reality. One mother in her stress-management class boasted that her cellphone enabled her to attend all of her daughter's school activities. "I don't miss anything," she told the group. "Yes, you do," Mandel countered, explaining that when the woman went on a hay ride with her daughter and other children, she spent the whole time on the phone. "Her body was present, but she wasn't there emotionally," Mandel says. "That sends a very ambivalent statement to a child. Sometimes it's better not to be there. To be on the phone with business is ignoring the child."

## Some 'addicted' to staying in touch

This "absent presence," as sociologists call it, can also occur when workers with cellphones care for older relatives. "One elderly parent was annoyed," Mandel

says. "She told her daughter, 'You trivialize me. You are not giving me your full attention. I'm not important to you. I'm competing for your time.'"

Employees feel more pulled between work and family than ever before, observes Ellen Galinsky, president of the Families and Work Institute in New York. As a result, she sees "an addictive quality to being in touch and worrying that you're going to be out of touch."

As the owner of a large collection agency in Las Vegas, David Stone knows that tug. He tries not to answer his phone at night. But he always thinks he has missed something vitally important for business. "During dinner and on weekends, my wife will roll her eyes and say, 'David, it's not that important.' She's always right. It might just be a business friend calling to see if I'm available for lunch."

At the same time, Mr. Stone emphasizes the benefits of being connected. Knowing he was reachable let him relax on a recent family vacation in Tahiti, for example.

Gabrielle Torello, a communications consultant in Hackensack, N.J., and the single mother of two young boys, calls her cellphone "an invaluable tool, but also the bane of my existence."

Yet like most parents, Ms. Torello would not be without her cellphone. "As difficult as it may be to field messages from an anxious editor at the playground or to sneak out of a meeting to whisper consolation to a 7-year-old frustrated by homework," she says, "having a cellphone allows me to keep in touch with all of the various and equally important aspects of my busy life."

For employees on electronic

leashes, cellphones and pagers raise questions about who draws the line between work and home, and where that line is.

Ms. Chesley frames the issue this way: "What are the norms in your workplace about getting calls on your cellphone after hours? Who provides the technology? Is it your cellphone or your employer's? Are individuals buying these themselves, wanting to be accessible to an employer? That has huge implications for family life. The social norms we're developing are really targeted toward increasing access, not toward denying access."

The problem of boundaries became evident to Christena Nippert-Eng when she took her children to a museum. A father was on his cellphone discussing business for several hours. Every time his child would say, "Oh Dad, look at this!" the man would motion that he was busy.

## Parents' multitasking leaves kids out

"Families are going to have to step up and address those issues," says Professor Nippert-Eng, a sociologist at the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago. "Kids often don't have a lot of power to force their parents' attention on them."

That lack of attention, whatever the reason, can have serious consequences. Nippert-Eng points to out-of-control children on reality shows such as "Supernanny" and "Nanny 911" as warning signs. "Children are starting to engage in very destructive behaviors to demand parents' attention," she says.

As a publicist at Pace University in Pleasantville, N.Y.,

Cara Halstead Cea must be available by cellphone around the clock. Although reporters and professors sometimes call during family gatherings or her son's baseball games, she finds a bright side.

"The phone affords me flexibility that I would not otherwise have," she says. "If I need to take an extra hour or two for personal business during the week, I - and my bosses - have the peace of mind of knowing that I can be reached if I am needed."

But sociologist Chesley offers a caution about such trade-offs. "This 24/7 access may be a high price to pay for getting a little bit of flexibility at the workplace - to get an hour off from your workday to take your kid to an after-school program, or whatever it is you're doing."

## Technology may be the answer, too

While praising electronic tools for helping people to lead productive lives, Jeff Kaye, CEO of an international recruiting firm in Dallas, also sees a downside. "We've become multitaskers," he says. "I can play with my kids while checking e-mail. But rather than becoming more effective, we're losing our ability to concentrate and focus. You do two things with average effectiveness, as opposed to doing one thing with superior effectiveness and then moving on to the second task. How much time did we actually save?"

Round-the-clock connections offer other challenges for Patricia Baronowski of New York, who works in investor relations with international clients.

"I used to keep my BlackBerry on vibrate, which was causing a little tension at home since it was



buzzing throughout the night," she says. Now she checks it before she goes to bed and when she wakes up. Clients and her employer know that if something is critical they can phone.

Ultimately, Nippert-Eng says, users of cellphones and pagers must speak up about the challenges they face. "Employers, employees, and family members have to be willing to address boundary issues, sometimes in very confrontational ways. Workers might have to say, 'I'm just not going to answer this cellphone.'"

Even these devices themselves

can be part of the solution, says Larry McCallum, a family life professor at Augustana College in Rock Island, Ill. "The real advantage of the newer technology is that, for the most part, it allows me to control most of the negative factors. Most cellphones have caller ID, so I can decide whether to answer a particular call. My father once told me, 'The phone doesn't care whether it gets answered.' The beauty of the system is in the hands of the user."

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## Michigan Politics

By George Weeks



## Lawmakers Ranked for Liberal Votes

The most liberal Michigan lawmakers on Capitol Hill, as ranked by the National Journal, are two Detroit Democrats—Representatives John Conyers and Carolyn Cheeks Kilpatrick.

Detroiters also often lead the liberal pack in the state House in Lansing, according to annual ratings by the *Inside Michigan Politics* newsletter. Not so of late in the state Senate.

"Many times in years past, the most liberal senators were African-Americans, usually from Detroit," IMP said in reporting results of its litmus test of voting in a one-year period that ended in November. "But that hasn't been the case in 2004-05. The two most liberal members are white—Liz Brater (D-Ann Arbor) and Minority Leader Bob Emerson (D-Flint). In fact, so are the top five, and eight of the top 10."

In its system, the independent newsletter used 100 percent as the top rating for a senator who voted "liberal"—as judged by IMP—on up to 26 roll calls on a wide range of social, economic, taxation, environmental, civil rights, and public health/safety issues.

(In the National Journal's rating, Conyers voted liberal 95 percent on economic issues, 88 percent, social, and 97 percent, foreign. For Kilpatrick it was 96-84-88. In contrast, it was 93-82-75 for Senator Carl Levin; 79-82-82 for Senator Debbie Stabenow.)

In the state Senate, according to IMP, Ann Arbor's Brater voted 96 percent liberal. For Flint's Emerson: 92.3. The highest-scoring Detroiters was Burton Leland at 83.3. The lowest liberal score was 50 percent for Senator James Barcia (D-Bay City), who also was the most conservative Democrat in Michigan's congressional delegation during his five House terms.

Senator Alan Sanborn (R-Richmond) is rated as the most conservative member of the state Senate, voting "liberal" 3.9 percent of the time. In contrast among Republicans, Senator Gerald Van Woerkom (R-Muskegon) voted liberal 34.6 percent of the time, making him the most moderate Republican senator.

IMP's rankings provide a more balanced view of a lawmaker's ideological leaning than the more narrow special interest rankings by business, labor, environmental, and other groups.

But what's more important to voters than liberal-conservative political labels is how a lawmaker delivers and votes on issues of importance to the politician's district.

Also influencing how a lawmaker votes, regardless of philosophy, and consolidates political

power, is working closely with unlikely allies. The 20th century master of that in the Michigan Senate was the late legendary, pugnacious Joe Mack of Ironwood, who cut deals on behalf of the Upper Peninsula for three decades.

When the retired Mack died in April at age 85, Associate Editor Andy Hill of the *Ironwood Daily Globe* wrote: "The last true giant of Upper Michigan politics is gone." He cut many a deal with the last true giant of Detroit politics—Coleman Young who, before becoming the city's longest-serving mayor, was in the Senate.

As Chief 98th District Judge Anders Tingstad of Bessemer told the *Globe*: "The U.P. and Detroit have very little in common, so Senator Mack could vote for Coleman Young's needs in the Detroit area, and Coleman Young could vote for Mack's needs up here."

Because of term-limits, there won't be a legislative giant in either of Michigan's peninsulas.

As Judge Tingstad aptly opined: "The power that the Legislature lost by term limits was absorbed by the bureaucracy. They're more difficult to deal with now than ever."

## Up North Rankings

Senator Mike Prusi (D-Ishpeming), who has the seat long held by Mack, currently ranks seventh on the liberal scale at 76.9 percent, along with two Metro Detroit Democrats.

Among the three senators representing the northern third of the Lower Peninsula, Senator Tony Stamas of Midland is a relatively moderate Republican, with a 23.1 percent liberal voting record.

Well down on IMP's liberal voting scale is Senator Jason Allen (R-Traverse City) grouped with four other Republicans (including Senate Majority Leader Ken Sikkema of Wyoming) at 15.4 percent.

Only three senators are judged by IMP to have a more conservative 2004-05 voting record than Senator Michelle McManus (R-Lake Leelanau), whose liberal voting record of 11.5 percent is shared by two others.

Among them is Senator Mike Bishop (R-Rochester), who may compete with Traverse City's Allen to replace Sikkema as Republican leader—and as majority leader if voting goes as expected and Republicans maintain control of the Senate.

George Weeks is the political columnist for *The Detroit News* and is syndicated by *Superior Features*.

## Why 'Integrity' Was Such a Sought-After Word This Year

By Sara Miller Llana

The Christian Science Monitor

Between the CIA leak investigation, scandals in Congress, and disgraced athletes, 2005 had more than its fair share of ethical disappointments.

The result? "Integrity" was the most looked-up word of 2005, according to Merriam-Webster's online dictionary.

That comes as no surprise to many. The reflex to type a word into [www.m-w.com](http://www.m-w.com) is often prompted by the desire to understand an event and its context. That is one reason "tsunami" and "fili-

buster" also made the top 10 list.

In a year in which it seemed in short supply, integrity - defined as firm adherence to a code; incorruptibility - was in high demand.

"So many people have challenged other people's integrity this year," says Richard Katula, who teaches political rhetoric at Northeastern University in Boston. "I don't remember a time since the Nixon impeachment hearings when political discourse was so coarsened and crude."

The word "refugee" made it to No. 2, after hurricane Katrina necessitated the evacuation of

thousands of Gulf Coast residents. The ensuing debate, over whether "refugee" was the proper term for displaced residents or whether it was in fact pejorative, summoned thousands of Americans to their dictionaries to decide for themselves. The word received more queries in one month than most words in an entire year.

Less-weighty scenarios shaped this year's list, too. Fingers rushed to type in the word "insipid" after the adjective was uttered on "American Idol."

For those in the word business, the public's effort to understand the verbal signs of the times is promising.

"It shows that the English-speaking population is not the bunch of illiterate dolts that some critics like to portray," says John Morse, president of Merriam-Webster in Springfield, Mass. "Dictionarymakers always had a pretty good sense of what words are used most often ... but never really knew what words are looked up most often."

Along with ubiquitous, irony, and metaphor - words that sit at the sweet spot of complexity and

curiosity - integrity has traditionally hovered near the top of Webster's hit parade.

But the noun moved to the front of the pack in recent years, reflecting, perhaps, its conspicuous absence from some committee rooms, boardrooms, locker rooms, and classrooms across America.

In Dr. Katula's class, the word integrity has become central to debate, especially with the overload of information today. "Students spend so much time on the Internet, they are constantly asking what information has integrity," he says.

For those in the integrity business, the news comes as both good and bad. Tim Dodd, the executive director of the Center for Academic Integrity at Duke University in Durham, N.C., says he wrote a colleague an e-mail when he found out that his area of expertise was the most popular word of 2005: In all honesty, I'm not sure whether I'm heartened or depressed by this finding, he wrote.

It's heartening, he explains later, that people are curious

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The quotation under the flag of *The St. Ignace News* on Page 1 is from the 10 triads written by Dr. Fred Newton Scott, creator and teacher of the first continuous course in journalism in the United States at the University of Michigan in 1890. The 10 triads are chiseled on the parapet of the Detroit News Building at 615 Lafayette Boulevard, Detroit. They were headed "Ideals of the Press" or "The Newspaper in a Free Society," and serve as a reminder of what a free press means to us.

## Letters to the Editor

### Letter Writer Must Get Facts Right

To the Editor:

Mary! Mary! Mary! Please get your facts straight before rambling on about something you really don't know much about. First of all, city employees cannot cash in an unlimited amount of accumulated sick and vacation time when retiring. The amount they can accumulate and cash in is dependent upon their length of service to the community, with a maximum of 105 days of sick time. My accumulated sick time, by the way, is 71 days, which I will be receiving over a three-month period. Secondly, this system was in place long before I worked for the city and was negotiated by employees in previous union contracts and was not instituted by me. Thirdly, this pay is not in addition to any other pay because there isn't any other pay. Fourthly, time sheets are turned in for every employee verifying their attendance record, including myself. Finally, the millage levy is the same for 2006 as it has been for at least the last 15 years and there will not be a millage increase.

This system is not unique to just the city and is used by the state, county, and private business. I would caution the editor to check the facts before publishing letters or any other information that is not verified. You

must also consider the source.

Gary L. Heckman

St. Ignace City Manager

Mr. Heckman refers to a letter from Mary Nichols of St. Ignace that was published in the December 22 edition.

### Veteran Impressed by Appreciation

To the Editor:

On Thursday, December 22, the St. Ignace Varsity Boys Basketball Team invited the local veterans to a lasagna dinner and to the JV and Varsity basketball game against Escanaba. As a veteran who attended the function, I was very impressed by this sincere expression of appreciation by Coach Ingalls, his coaching staff, and the basketball players. They did a fine job of serving, and then joined the veterans in enjoying a delicious meal. We are extremely fortunate to have a group of teachers and coaches in this community who are doing a wonderful job of instilling proper values in our young people.

John Monville

St. Ignace