Abstract of the thesis:
WHERE TO DRAW THE LINE?
ANTECEDENTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF THE INTEGRATION OF WORK IN HOME LIFE
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This thesis aimed to examine why some employees tend to integrate work in their home lives, whereas others tend to separate the two domains. The central research question of this study is if and how work, home and individual characteristics influence the permeability of the home domain. Further, we examined for which employees’ permeable home boundaries can be beneficial, and for which employees’ permeable home boundaries provoke work-to-family conflict. The research questions in this thesis were examined by means of both qualitative and quantitative data, collected in a Dutch multinational in the public and business services.

The results show a complex process; employees do not only manage the boundary between work and home in different ways, the advantages and disadvantages of integration differ for employees as well. Home permeability is primarily prescribed by the work situation: the perceived opportunity to separate, telecommuting, flextime and pressure to work overtime determine the boundary permeability to a large extent. This is a powerful influence, and one that is difficult to manage for employees. Employees who telecommute and who prefer separation cannot avoid high levels of home permeability.

Integrating work in home life results in work-to-family conflict for all households, except for single employees. This study showed that for some households, such as dual earners, high home permeability results in high levels of work-to-family conflict. Other households rather facilitate the integration of work in home life. Traditional households based on a conventional breadwinner model have the highest permeable home boundaries, and experience the lowest levels of conflict due to permeability. In this way, households with a traditional breadwinner division seem most adapted to the demands of today’s organizations.