1 GENERAL INTRODUCTION

THE INTEGRATION OF WORK IN HOME LIFE

For centuries, work and home have been integrated in a farm or a craftsmen’s household. Work was mostly done at home, children helped their parents from an early age on, and family life was often adapted to the demands of work. Industrial times gradually brought a deep separation between work and home, predominantly along gender lines (e.g. Zaretsky, 1976). During the twentieth century the Taylorist organizations introduced a solid system of strict rules that prescribed their wageworkers what to do and where and when to do it. Work became increasingly performed in factories and institutions. This brought along a spatial separation of work and home. Simultaneously, a temporal separation was called for as well: employees needed to have time off from work and the concepts of the eight-hour working day, weekends and retirement were established. A ‘breadwinner – housewife’ division between men and women, ideal of the bourgeoisie, further supported the separation of work and home; men left their houses and wives to go to work early in the morning and returned in the evening just in time for dinner (Beauvoir, 1949). The primary responsibility of women was raising children, and, if at all possible, they were to stay at home.

More recently, in the aftermath of the industrial era and in the development of today’s knowledge and ICT society, the separation between work and home weakens, and the boundaries of the work domain, but especially of the home domain, become permeable again. Three recent developments deeply affected the relation between work and home and promoted (re)integration.

Firstly, over the last forty years, female participation in the labor force has rapidly increased. In the European Union, women’s participation in the labor market has increased from approximately twenty-five percent up to almost sixty percent. The traditional division of labor between men and women became no longer self-evident. As a consequence, more and more employees – male, but above all female – are confronted with the task of combining work and home responsibilities (e.g. Hochschild, 1989; Keuzenkamp & Hooghiemstra, 2000; Van der Lippe, Jager & Kops, 2003; Winslow, 2005). Simultaneously, employers are confronted with employees who want to be able to combine their jobs and their personal lives and who demand that employers assist them by means of family friendly workarrangements. Especially in a tight labor market, adopting family friendly workarrangements is almost unavoidable for employers (Remery, Schippers & Van Doorne-Huiskes, 2002).
Secondly, new technological developments such as the use of laptops, e-mail and mobile phones have been introduced into the workplace and at home. By means of ICT, more and more people are able to work at home and are available for work outside office hours. Today, temporal and physical boundaries between work and home can be breached electronically, and as a result the span of work tends to spread into the homes of individuals (Ahrentzen, 1990; Hill, Hawkins & Miller, 1996; Perin, 1998, Glebbeek, De Jong & Noorman, 2006).

Thirdly, work arrangements that permit the flexibility of regular working hours and places are being adopted within many organizations. Also, organizations adopt flexible work arrangements, such as telecommuting and flextime, in order to enable employees to meet their family demands (Kossek, Noe & DeMarr, 1999; Rau & Hyland, 2002). The underlying rationale of these work arrangements is that by integrating work and home, it becomes easier to fulfill demands of both domains whenever needed. On the other hand, for many organizations, such integration of work and home is economically and culturally driven by high client availability levels, more efficiency (getting more work done without interruption by co-workers) and cost effectiveness (e.g. less traffic time, less office space and costs).

The balance between integration of work in home life that is economically driven and integration that is offered to assist employees with the combination of work and home is often ambiguous and characterized by tensions and conflicts. The freedom to offer flexible regular working hours and workplaces can go hand-in-hand with a duty to do so. From an employees’ perspective it is a positive working condition if they are able to leave early from work to pick up their children from school. However, when employers - implicitly or explicitly - expect that employees are available to work when they are home, the autonomy of employees to establish their home boundaries themselves diminishes.

Employees are increasingly conscious of this tension that comes with the integration of work in home life; its benefits, its pitfalls and above all its limits. Integration has come with advantages for employees. Flexible work arrangements can facilitate work-life balance and the fulfillment of both work and family duties (Ralston, 1989; Hill, Ferris & Märtinson, 2003). The ability to work at home increases the autonomy of employees to perform work tasks at their own convenience and reduces time spent in commuting (Kurland & Bailey, 1999).

Though previous research indicates that a certain degree of integration may help to manage work and home, too much of it may have the opposite effect (Prutchno, Lichtfield & Fried, 2000). Because employees are able to take their work home, employers may presume – and expect - that employees can finish their tasks at home and employees may find it difficult to mentally detach themselves from work at the end of the day (Glebbeek, De Jong & Noorman,
General Introduction

Integration of work in home life also may result in boundary blurring (Ashforth, Kreiner & Fugate, 2000) and in work to family conflict (Olson-Buchanan & Boswell, 2006). Many of the flexible work arrangements are aimed at re-shaping the work day. Instead of clearly marked working hours and work places, work can be done anytime and anywhere. However, because work is at all times accessible, integration rather tends to extend than to re-shape the work day; the end of the formal work day no longer self-evidently implies the end of the informal work day (Schor, 1992; Lewis, 2003), and employees have to draw the boundaries between work and home themselves. One of the most significant implications of the integration of work and home is that employees have to negotiate and establish the boundaries for themselves and with their families. This is the principal theme of this thesis.

When work is not bounded by work arrangements that indicate clear temporal and physical markers, employees must individually and actively manage and synchronize home and work (Glebbeek, et al., 2006). This requires that they as individuals reflect on the extent that work and home may intermingle and where they wish to draw the line. Above the individual level, every household, whether it comprises one individual, a couple, or a family, has its own strategy in combining work and home, and therefore generates a characteristic pattern of spatial and temporal boundaries (Felstead & Jewson, 2000). Household units use such strategies, given their specific work and home characteristics (Kossek et al., 1999), in order to balance competing demands of work and home and reduce or avoid conflict with employers as well as partners and/or children (Voydanoff, 2002). Employees are confronted with constraints in their work situation, and have to discuss and negotiate the needs, wishes and practicalities of both work and home life with their family members. Boundaries are often established just out of habit or tradition, however, many household units have to invent the best strategy for themselves, and reflect on the extent that work and home may intermingle and the costs and benefits that come along: is integration helpful or a source of conflict?

Managing the Boundaries Between Work and Home

From the nineteen seventies, the relation between work and home has been analyzed from an ‘open-system approach’ (Katz & Kahn, 1978). This approach assumes that events in one domain have a positive or negative effect on the other domain (e.g. Staines, 1980). More recently, the traditional open-system approaches have been criticized for portraying individuals as merely passive and reactive beings, instead of active beings (Campbell Clark, 2000). Boundaries are partially formed by external factors - such as work and home characteristics - and partially by individuals’ by means of their behavior (Hall & Richter, 1988; Campbell Clark, 2000).
Neglecting the active role of individuals therefore implies that only the boundaries as described by work and home surroundings are taken into consideration. Especially because more and more employees have to establish the work-home boundaries for themselves, a perspective was needed that incorporates the actions and preferences of individuals, and the freedom of action they have in placing the boundaries they desire.

In work and family research that aims at understanding why and how individuals combine work and home, *Boundary theory* has been developed (e.g. Nippert-Eng, 1996a; Ashforth, Kreiner & Fugate, 2000; Rau & Hyland, 2002). Boundary theory analyzes the relationship between work and home by focusing on the boundaries that divide the two domains, the ease and frequency with which individuals cross boundaries, and the meanings individuals assign to both domains. Starting point of the theory is the assumption that the ‘strength’ of the boundaries indicates the extent of integration or separation, and the ease of transitioning between domains. The extent of integration or separation of work in home life is determined by the permeability of the home boundaries.

Work and home boundaries are partially formed by external factors in the work and home situation and partially by the behavior of employees (Hall & Richter, 1988; Campbell Clark, 2000). Permeability is the boundary characteristic that reflects the actual behavior of employees in allowing or rejecting work to enter the home domain and vice versa (Pleck, 1977; Eagle, Miles & Icenogle, 1997; Kossek, Noe & DeMarr, 1999). It can be defined as the degree to which a person physically located in one domain (i.e. the home domain) allows psychological and behavioral elements from another domain (i.e. the work domain) to enter (Hall & Richter, 1988; Ashforth et al., 2000; Frone, 2003). Thus, the boundary behavior of employees defines the work-home boundaries, just as working hours define the temporal work-home boundary. Within the limits of their social contexts, through the permeability of their home boundaries, employees can actively manage where they draw the line between work and home.

A number of studies have indicated that boundaries between work and home are asymmetrically permeable: work is allowed to intrude more into family life than family into work (Hall & Richter, 1988; Frone, Russell & Cooper, 1992b; Eagle, Miles & Icenogle, 1997). Therefore, the focal point of this study is the examination of the permeability of the home boundaries.

Two ways of boundary management have been identified in previous research: separation and integration (Nippert-Eng, 1996a; Felstead & Jewson, 2000). These ways may be thought of as the two extremes of a continuum. Employees who tend to separate work from home establish clear home boundaries that shelter home life from work influences. In contrast, employees who tend to
integrate have permeable home boundaries that allow work distractions and interruptions to enter their home life. Particularly in the growing world of knowledge work the integration of work into home seems to be the trend. Because of flexible work arrangements and the accessibility of work at home for some employees - mainly knowledge workers - separation is less likely to occur unless they actively pursue this strategy (Kossek et al., 1999). For other employees, for example telephonists in a call center office, high integration of work and home is difficult to attain. Separation seems more related to the traditional time and workplaces fixed jobs.

As described, boundary research takes as a starting point that employees actively manage their boundaries. Boundary Theory also indicates that employees have preferences on the extent that work and home may or may not intermingle, and where and when to draw the line (Nippert-Eng, 1996a; Campbell Clark, 2000). For instance, employees might be willing to work from home during weekdays, but may draw the line at working in the weekends. Individuals differ in their boundary preferences, with some favoring integration and others favoring separation (Nippert-Eng, 1996a; Ashforth, Kreiner & Fugate, 2000). Individuals who prefer to integrate work in their home, desire thin permeable home boundaries that help work and home to crossover easily. In contrast, individuals who prefer to separate work from home, desire thick impermeable boundaries that ‘help to keep the work out’.

Up until today, there is relatively little empirical research on why some individuals prefer to integrate work and home, while others prefer to separate the two domains. Previous research proposed that those with care responsibilities will more likely prefer integration of work and home (Clay, 1995; Kossek et al., 1999). Others found that employees, who experience much blurring of the work and home boundary, were more likely to prefer integration (Desrocher & Sargent, 2004).

Though employees can manage their boundary permeability to some extent, their work situation can offer significant limitations. Therefore, the work situations of employees do not necessarily correspond to their boundary preferences (Rothbard, Phillips & Dumas, 2005). Employees working in lower level jobs often have less access to flexible work arrangements and thus less opportunity to integrate work and home (e.g. Swanberg, Pitt-Catsouphes, & Drescher-Burke, 2005). Vice versa, having permeable boundaries between work and home does not imply that employees prefer it that way. It might very well be that employees prefer not to perform work tasks at home, but that work characteristics compel them to do so anyway\(^1\). The rise of flexible work arrangements and other, less desired, work characteristics that facilitate integration - such as

\(^1\) Boundary Theory acknowledges that choices and behaviour of individual can be prescribed by their surroundings, that individuals make these choices in consideration to and in interaction with their surroundings, and finally that choices and behaviour can be unconscious. Because these assumptions are central to boundary management, we did not for instance choose to study home permeability from a Rational Choice perspective.
pressure to work overtime or to take work home - raises the important question whether employees are able to separate work and home if they desire to.

For some employees, setting permeable home boundaries that allow work and home demands to be fulfilled simultaneously may be useful and beneficial; for others allowing work to enter home life may provoke conflict. Previous research indicated that when work intrusions are permitted to enter the home domain, the chance of work-to-family conflict increases. High levels of home permeability were found to be positively associated with work-to-family conflict (Campbell Clark, 2002a, b; Olson-Buchanan & Boswell, 2006) and with its counterpart family-to-work conflict (Voydanoff, 2005).

RESEARCH PROBLEM

The main objective of this thesis is to examine to what extent and why employees integrate work into their home lives or separate work from their home lives. In this, we examine the antecedents of the integration of work in home life. More specifically, the central research question is if and how work, home and individual characteristics influence home permeability. Further, we examine the consequences of high home permeability for work-to-family conflict. In addition, we analyze if and how gender and home characteristics influence the relation between home permeability and work-to-family conflict. Thus, this study examines for which employees’ permeable boundaries can be beneficial, and for which employees’ permeable home boundaries provoke work-to-family conflict?

This study aims to fill a gap in our knowledge on the antecedents and consequences of the integration of work in home life. Boundary theory provides a useful framework for understanding and examining boundary management, and several empirical studies have been conducted making use of Boundary Theory (e.g. Ashforth et al., 2000; Rau & Hyland, 2002). However, up till now it was not empirically measured why employees integrate work in their home lives or separate their home lives from their work, taking their work and home situation and boundary preferences into perspective. Moreover, it was not yet empirically measured if boundary preferences and the home situation of employees, influence the relation between home permeability and work-to-family conflict.

This topic places this study at an intersection of two scientific disciplines: micro-sociology en psychology. As mentioned before, boundaries are partially formed by structural and cultural opportunities and constraints, as is studied within micro-sociology. Bounded by these work and home surroundings, employees also actively manage their boundaries in interaction
with their environment and have preferences on how they wish to manage them as is studied in psychology.

The triangle between context, individual behavior and individual preferences is complex of nature and, one might argue, difficult to unravel. However, this complex triangle reflects the interactive process of how employees manage their home boundaries. When an employee is confronted with a strict deadline that has to be met by Monday, he may consider the expectations of his boss and the consequences of not meeting the deadline, the football game of his children, and his own preference not to work at weekends. After consideration, he may perform some work tasks after all or wait until Monday. Thus, in order to understand the process of boundary management it is essential to incorporate both structural and cultural work and home characteristics, employees’ preferences for integration or separation and their actual permeability behavior. Figure 1.1 demonstrates the interactive process of managing the home boundary as used in this study:

Figure 1.1 The interactive process of managing the home boundary

![Diagram](image)

This study explores three factors that may influence how employees manage the permeability of their home boundaries. First, we will examine the effects of various work characteristics on home permeability. Though the influence of work characteristics on home permeability is commonly acknowledged within Boundary Theory research, until now their effects on home permeability

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2 he can be read as she, and vice versa
have not been empirically measured. This study contributes to existing research by examining the
effect of various work characteristics on boundary permeability.

Second, we will examine if and how home characteristics influence home permeability.
Just as the work situation, the home situation can delimit or facilitate employees in their boundary
management (Nippert-Eng, 1996a). Though there is a great body of research on boundary
management for employees who telecommute (e.g. Tietze & Musson, 2002; Ahrentzen, 1990;
Sullivan & Lewis, 2001; Berke, 2003), so far there have been relatively few studies on studies on
how employees manage these boundaries in general (Nippert-Eng, 1996a; Edgell Becker &

Third, we will explore and examine the boundary preferences of employees. We will
explore which employees prefer permeable home boundaries and which employees prefer
impermeable home boundaries. Further, this study adds to prior research since it empirically
measures the influence of boundary preferences on home permeability. Moreover, we examine if
boundary preferences have a moderating influence on the determinants of home permeability.

After studying the antecedents of home permeability (work characteristics, home
characteristics and boundary preferences), we will examine its consequences for work-to-family
conflict (WTF conflict). In this, we will examine for which employees high levels of home
permeability result in work-to-family conflict, and for which employees’ home permeability
reduces or even avoids such conflict. We will study the moderating influence of boundary
preferences and household characteristics on the relation between home permeability and WTF
conflict. Studying such non-linear relations is essential to understand the complex nature of
boundary management (Edwards & Rothbard, 1999; Eby et al., 2005). Figure 1.2 shows the
central research question of this study in diagram:
Finally, we will differentiate our findings for men and women. Gender is deeply embedded in work-family relationships. From the moment that women entered the labor market en-masse, the daily living tasks of women have increased. Because of the second shift at home, employed women have – as so called - two jobs whereas most men have one job (Hochschild, 1989; 1997). Though (young) men do take more responsibility for the care for their children (Coltrane, 1996), the division between paid work and household tasks is still highly gender orientated. Is it because of the participation of women in paid employment that households, and above all women, need to integrate work and home?

Previous research found contradictory results on gender differences with respect to home permeability and WTF conflict. Some research found no significant correlations between gender and home permeability (Campbell Clark, 2002b); others found that men have more permeable home boundaries than women (Pleck, 1977; Olson-Buchanan & Boswell, 2006) or, vice versa, that women have more permeable home boundaries than men (Hall & Richter, 1988). Similarly, some research found no gender differences for WTF conflict (Frone, Russell & Cooper, 1992b; Eagle, Miles & Icenogle, 1997); other studies found that women report higher levels of WTF conflict than men (e.g. Duxbury, Higgens & Lee, 1994; Williams & Alliger, 1994).

Recent results suggest that gender is a moderating factor that enriches or depletes effects of work-family interactions (Rothbard, 2001; Eby et al., 2005). Therefore, the moderating effect of gender on permeability and its effect on WTF conflict will be studied within this thesis. The state of the art on the division of paid and unpaid labor in the Netherlands will be discussed and taken into account in interpretation of the results.
RESEARCH DESIGN

Case study

The objective of this thesis is to explore the antecedents of why employees integrate or separate work from their home lives, and to explore what the consequences can be of integrating work into home. We did not aim for a sample that is statistically representative for all organizations, but one that represents the variation of the phenomenon studied (Swanborn, 1996). A single case study enabled us to analyze the boundary behavior of employees with different opportunities to integrate and separate home from work, while enhancing comparability of other work and organizational characteristics. Because we attain variation on some aspects (work arrangements, work floor culture and work content), while keeping other aspects constant (such as organizational culture, field and size), we were able to empirically test the relations between the central concepts in the recent theory on work-home boundaries.

Previous research found that whether employees integrate or separate work and home, relates to their work characteristics, culture on the work floor and work content – knowledge work versus administrative and manual work (Nippert-Eng, 1996a; Ashforth, 2000). Such a situational context is often linked to the job level of employees. That is, most employees working in high level jobs have the option to integrate work and home, whereas most employees working in lower jobs do not (Nippert-Eng, 1996a; Breedveld, 1998). There is still a lot of work that cannot be performed at home. Though much of the research on the integration of work and home is focused on knowledge workers (e.g. Surber, 1983; Scholarios, 2001; Ammons & Markham, 2004), we find it essential to broaden this focus and examine how employees in other jobs and in other educational levels manage between work and home. Thus, based on previous research on work-home boundaries we aimed for an organization with much variety in knowledge based versus industrial, manual work. This variety in groups of employees would enable us to explore diverging practices and preferences on the integration of work and home in the context of one organization. The multinational that we selected for this study had such a variety in types of work, educational levels and job levels. Moreover, it is an organization that is progressive when it comes to work-family arrangements: it was the first organization in the Netherlands to adopt flexible working hours in 1999. Flexible work arrangements such as flextime and telecommuting are now widely used within this organization.
**Research site**

This thesis is based on a case study of a Dutch multinational in the public and business services. The history of the multinational begins in 1852. During the first fifty years, the organization was a private firm and a pioneer in its field. The organization employed both higher educated personnel that invented and managed new technologies and lower educated personnel that executed the services of the organization. In the beginning of the twentieth century, the organization became a public and as such part of governments’ policies, like work and wage policies.

In the eighties of the twentieth century many Western governments reduced their intermingling in economic markets by privatizing their public organizations. Simultaneously, the core business of the organizations of this thesis, information technologies, developed exponential As a result of these processes, the organization became a private firm again. With the privatization, the organization lost its monopoly position in the Netherlands and started its activities abroad. Customers focus became more apparent. New management and training of employees, prioritizing customer relations and the development of new products were initialized. The organization made the transition from a traditional somewhat slow changing organization to a dynamic multinational. Many of the employees still working for the organization have experienced the transformation from a public organization to a private market oriented firm, and the major cultural changes that accompanied this transformation process. With this transition, new flexible work arrangements -that give employees more freedom to determine their working hours and workplace- were initiated and stimulated. Because of the rise of information technologies, highly educated personnel became more essential while lower educated employees, such as mechanics and employees in administrative and call center jobs, were still needed for the manual labor that remained a major component of its organizational tasks.

Today, the organization is the market leader in its field in the Netherlands, and has major divisions outside its national borders in the rest of Western-Europe. The data collection for this study was gathered in the years 2003-2004. At that time the multinational provided their services to over 14.7 million customers in the Netherlands and employed almost 33.000 employees in the Netherlands.

In its existence, the organization has known many transformations, and is more or less in a permanent process of innovation and reorganization today. Particularly in recent years the organization has gone through many reorganizations through necessity to the turbulent (international) economic market. Two forms of reorganizations can be distinguished; financial steered reorganizations that imply a cutback of personnel, and product or process steered

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3 The information concerning the multinational was retrieved from the corporate website, in august 2004.
reorganizations whereby departments or units of the organization are dismantled, integrated with others or replaced. Both occur often simultaneously and can cause agitation among personnel; however only the first form receives media attention. In 1998, the organization announced the cutback of 4000 jobs, of which 2000 mechanics. In 2000 a new cutback of 8000 jobs was announced. In the course of this study the organization went through several reorganizations, which included both cutbacks and transformations of departments. Though the reorganizations are numerous, the organization is not an exceptional case in the Dutch labor market. In recent years, many major organizations endured extensive reorganizations. Recession, globalization, new technologies, efficiency reasons or mismanagement; all of these factors may contribute to the perceived need for reorganization. Whether these reorganizations are indeed strategies to improve the employability of employees (Steijn, 2001), as was a popular belief in the nineties, or not, is debatable. The fact is that small and large transformations are part of the working lives of many Dutch employees. Therefore, reorganizations - or the threat of - are conceived in this research as one of the working characteristics which employees may encounter.

The multinational was selected for its job variety in type of work – traditional mechanical work, modern ICT jobs, knowledge work and old and new service jobs. The tasks within the organization range from sales, product management, consultancy and marketing, to call center work, mechanical work, engineering and production. Employees in working in high level jobs often work in management, consultancy, engineering and marketing jobs. Employees working in level jobs mostly work in mechanical jobs, in administration jobs, in a call center or in sales.

Data collection
Four departments were selected, varying with respect to access to and use of flexible work arrangements, job culture and work content, with a total of 8,795 employees. Selection was theoretically driven aiming at a sample in which employees are represented who differ in work characteristics (compare Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987; Maso, 1987). In this way, we were able to incorporate employees with much and with little independence in establishing work-home boundaries.

Two smaller departments comprise primarily knowledge work in higher job levels, and some administrative support. One department comprises a combination of high level knowledge jobs and medium level service oriented jobs, such as customer relations and debtor management. The last department is large and rather Tayloristic of nature; it contains primarily low level technical and manual labor jobs, such as mechanics. The department further consists of low level technical and manual labor jobs, such as mechanics. The department further consists of low level technical and manual labor jobs, such as mechanics. The department further consists of low level
Within each department, employees work in low level and high level jobs, though the percentages vary (4 till 32% for low level jobs, 24 till 53% for high level jobs). The departments also differ in their gender distribution. The department which consists primarily of low level technical and manual and service jobs employs for the most part male employees. The department that has a combination of knowledge jobs and medium level service oriented jobs employs over 40 percent of female employees. The other two departments – which consist mainly of knowledge work – each have around 25 percent female employees. This implies that gender effects in our findings could be explained by the skewed division among jobs. This will be taken into account in the analysis and the interpretation of our results.

Of three departments we were able to approach the whole workforce due to their small number of employees (a total of 1,270). In the fourth and largest department - with a total workforce of 7,525 employees – we selected respondents by means of a singular stratified sample, oversampling women and very low and very high job levels considering their under representation in the organization. A more detailed description of the sample and response can be found in the appendix of this thesis.

**Research methods**

This study made use of both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Such a mixed methods design can deepen the insights of results of previous research by conducting different, but complementary methods of data collection (Patton, 1987; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2002). First, 24 low structured in-depth interviews were conducted with employees of the multinational. For the interviews, we selected six employees from each department (in total twenty four employees). We tried to ensure an equal spread of job level, gender, work content and age among the respondents. Because research on work-home boundaries is still relatively young (Nippert Eng, 1996a,b), the face to face interviews provides us with detailed information on boundary management. Moreover, in the interviews the employees described the process of boundary management in their own words. In this way, they provided us with detailed information that could not be derived from quantitative data. The interviews emphasized the need to incorporate less tangible work and home characteristics in this study, such as expectations of family members, co-workers and employers, but employees own boundary preferences as well.

In addition, these interview protocols helped to formulate the basis of the second research method in this study: a survey (see appendix). This was conducted by means of a ‘web survey’. Since employees working in lower level jobs did not have access to internet services and thus had
no chance to participate in the web survey, a questionnaire in print was distributed among these employees. In total 3,711 questionnaires were distributed and 1,252 were returned (33.7 %). After removal of questionnaires with no valid demographic data, a total of 1,065 completed questionnaires could be used in this study. In this phase of the study, the in-depth-interviews helped to understand and interpret the results of the survey.

OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

This thesis aims to explore how today’s employees in a modern multinational ICT company manage their boundaries between work and home. The central research question is if and how work, home and individual characteristics influence home permeability. Moreover, we analyze how these characteristics influence the consequences of high home permeability for work to family conflict. The central research question is answered throughout this thesis (chapter two till five).

The second chapter comprises an exploratory study of the boundaries between work and home and preferences of employees for integrating or separating work and home. First, the meaning of the term boundary is explored and several boundary dimensions are distinguished. Furthermore, this study explores which employees prefer permeable boundaries that allow integration and which employees prefer impermeable boundaries.

The third chapter examines the influence of work characteristics on home permeability. Both work arrangements, such as telecommuting and flexible working hours, as less tangible work characteristics such as pressure to work overtime, are taken into account. Further, this chapter elaborates on boundary preferences. It examines if and how boundary preferences of employees influence their boundary permeability. In addition, we examine whether employees’ boundary preferences moderate the influence of several cultural and structural work characteristics on home permeability.

The fourth chapter analyzes the possible impact of boundary preferences on the relation between home permeability and WTF conflict. This study also examines if the relation between permeability and WTF conflict is different for men and women who combine their work with the care for children.

In the fifth chapter we elaborate on the results of chapter four, and examine if and how the gender division of paid and unpaid labor in the Netherlands influences where employees draw the line between work and home, and for which households home permeability minimizes or aggravates WTF conflict. The main findings of these four studies are concluded and discussed in the sixth and final chapter.