INTRODUCTION

In pre-industrial times, work and home have been integrated in a farm or a craftsmen’s household for centuries. Industrial times gradually brought a deep separation between work and home, predominantly along gender lines (e.g. Zaretsky 1976). In the aftermath of the industrial area and in the emerging knowledge and ICT society, the sharp separation between work and home starts to weaken, and the boundaries between work and home seem to become permeable again. Nowadays, boundaries between work and home can be breached electronically. By means of ICT, an increasing number of employees can work at home and are available to work outside office hours. For many organizations, such integration of work and home is economically and culturally driven by the imperatives of client availability levels, efficiency and cost effectiveness.

Along with the development of our knowledge and ICT society, a second development deeply affected the work-home linkages in recent decades and promoted integration: the rapid increase in female labor force participation. Over the last 40 years, women (re)entered the labor market in massive numbers (in the EU from about 25% till almost 60%). As a consequence, more and more employees - male and female – are confronted with the task of combining work and home responsibilities. The increasing number of modern households in which both partners have jobs, child care responsibilities and household running responsibilities force organizations to adopt work arrangements that make work hours and places flexible in order to enable employees to meet their family demands.

The balance between integration that is economically driven by efficiency reasons, and integration that is offered to assist employees with the combination of work and home, is often ambiguous and characterized by tensions and conflicts. Working men and women are increasingly conscious of this tension, and of how they want to use their time and to what extent work may integrate in home life. On the one hand, integration can indeed facilitate the combination of work and home tasks, especially when employees have children. On the other hand, integration of work in home life confronts employees with their work duties while they are at home. Many employees reflect on the extent that work and home may intermingle and the costs and benefits that come along: is blending helpful or a source of conflict? This duality comes transparent in everyday choices like ‘If I leave work early I can spend more time with my
children, but I have some work to do in the evening’ (Jerry, a 34 year old marketing consultant). This study focuses on today’s permeability of the home domain for work influences, and its potential costs for family life for employees of a Dutch multinational in the telecommunications sector. We specifically examine the role of two possible moderating effects on the relationship between home permeability and work-to-family conflict: the effects of boundary preferences for integration or separation and of gender differences in combining work and care tasks.

The following section discusses previous research on WTF conflict, home permeability and boundary preferences. Gender differences are discussed throughout the section. The hypotheses of this study are formulated at the end of the theoretical section. Next, we provide a description of the methods used after which we will give the results. Finally we conclude and discuss our findings.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH AND THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Work to Family Conflict

Work Family Conflict (WFC) is a form of (role) conflict in which pressures from work and family are incompatible in some respects (Greenhaus & Beutel, 1985:77). WFC reflects therefore the lack of fit between work and family (Frone et al., 1992a).

Recent models acknowledge the reciprocal nature of WFC and make a distinction between two types: the interference of work with family (work-to-family conflict) and the interference of family life with work (family-to-work conflict) (Frone et al., 1992a; Frone, Yardley & Markel, 1997; Byron, 200516). Since this study examines the effect of the permeability of the home domain for work influences, we focus on the interference of work with family life: work-to-family conflict (WTF conflict). Below we will give a short overview of several predictors as examined in previous research. Socio-demographic factors and work characteristics are discussed respectively.

Previous research shows contradicting results regarding gender differences in WTF conflict research. Some research found no gender differences (Frone et al., 1992b; Eagle, Miles & Icenogle, 1997). Other studies found that women report higher levels of WTF conflict than men (Duxbury, Higgens & Lee, 1994; Gutek, Searle & Klepa, 1991; Williams & Alliger, 1994).

16 Byron (2005) uses the similar term work family interference
WFC is higher for those who have more children and younger children (e.g. Grzywatch & Marks, 2000; Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999), who experience less family support (Grzywatch & Marks, 2000) and who are highly involved in family life (Carlson & Perrewe, 1999). Frone, Yardley & Markel (1997) found that WTF conflict indirectly impacts FTW conflict through parental overload. However, Byron (2005) found that the number of hours spent on housework or childcare did not result in higher levels of WTF conflict. WFC is not higher – or lower – for individuals who are married (Duxbury, Higgens & Lee, 1994; Madsen; 2003)

Job stress, job involvement, time spent in work, little support from co-workers and supervisors, low control and less flexible schedules, were found to be positively related to WTF conflict (e.g. Thomas & Ganster, 1995; Frone et al., 1997). For women, WFC is higher for those who work longer hours (Gutek et al., 1991; Grzywatch & Marks, 2000). Most previous research found that arrangements aimed at improving work-life balance, such as flextime, reduce WTF conflict (Ralston, 1989; Hill, Ferris & Martinson, 2003). However, others found that these arrangements did not reduce conflict (Shinn, Wong, Simko & Ortiz-Torres, 1989; Hill, Miller, Weiner & Colihan, 1998).

**Work-to-Family Conflict and home permeability**

Aside from work and home characteristics, permeability has been marked in previous research as a predictor of WTF conflict (Campbell Clark 2002a,b; Olson-Buchanan & Boswell, 2006) or of its counterpart FTW conflict (Voydanoff, 2005). Permeability is 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, Kreiner & Fugate, 2000). Permeable home boundaries are porous to intrusions, distractions or interruptions of other domains or domain members, such as mental distractions or work related phone calls (Hall & Richter, 1988; Frone, 2003; chapter two).

In previous literature WFC and permeability are sometimes linked together both conceptually and empirically. WFC was defined by permeability (Frone et al., 1992b), and vice versa, the extent of permeability was defined by the level of conflict (Eagle et al., 1997). However, other authors have analyzed WFC and permeability as separate concepts (Campbell Clark, 2002a,b; Olson-Buchanan & Boswell, 2006).

The close connection between WFC and permeability is based on the premise that WFC can only occur when work or family intrusions are permitted to enter the other domain. When domains are separated by impermeable boundaries, there is little overlap and therefore little mutual impact. In that case, objective job conditions and employees’ subjective reactions to these conditions, do not affect the home domain, due to impregnable boundaries (Lambert, 1990).
contrast, when domains are integrated, the boundaries are permeable and porous for influences of the other domain. The degree of permeability of the home boundaries determines the extent that work enters the home domain, and as such the possibility of WTF conflict. This reasoning is consistent with spill-over theory - a theory on the relationship between work and home which proposes that emotions, values or events within one domain affect the other domain - that argues that low boundary separation results in much spill-over (Staines, 1980).

All this suggests that employees with impermeable home boundaries may experience low levels of WTF conflict, whereas employees with permeable home boundaries may experience high levels of WTF conflict. Indeed, Campbell Clark (2002a,b) found a positive relation between high home permeability and WFC. A combination of low boundary permeability and high boundary flexibility - the degree to which a boundary may contract or expand - resulted in the lowest levels of WFC (Campbell Clark 2002b). In addition, Buchanan & Boswell (2006) found that home permeability was positively related to WTF conflict. Desrocher, Hilton & Larwood (2005) found that WFC was positively related to employees’ perception of the blurring of work and family life.

This may suggest that when work enters the home domain through permeable boundaries, this self-evidently results in WTF conflict. However, permeability means that the home boundaries are open for both negative and positive work influences (e.g. Barnett, Marshall & Sayer, 1992; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000). Permeability in itself does not define whether the entering of work is positive or negative. Although permeability has a negative connotation as a side effect of modern work arrangements and technologies, it is a neutral concept in itself. That is, it can potentially be beneficial and damaging, depending on the situation of the individual. Thus, permeability can be a precondition for WFC and is not a synonym.

Permeability does not present conflict for all employees. Both permeable boundaries that allow for integration and impermeable boundaries that allow for separation have their costs and benefits (Ashforth, Kreiner & Fugate, 2000). Separation can be beneficial for employees since it makes it easier to create boundaries and protects against role blurring. Hence, impermeable boundaries enable employees to protect what is valuable from that which is less valuable. For example, when someone experiences a lot of stress from work, it may be beneficial to set impermeable boundaries that keep the work out. However, separation may also have costs: it increases the difficulty of transitioning between domains, increases the impact of interruptions, and diminishes flexibility (Ashforth et al., 2000).

Permeable boundaries that allow for integration facilitate employees to fulfill demands of both domains simultaneously. Someone who telecommutes is often able to fulfill a family matter
when needed and to pick up his or her work tasks immediately afterwards. When someone has to juggle a lot of work and home tasks and/or experiences work as positive, it may be beneficial to set permeable boundaries that allow smooth transitions.

Thus, permeable home boundaries may be useful when work and care tasks must be combined, as is the case with working parents. In fact, many organizational policies aim at the integration of work and home, in order to enable employees to fulfill demands of both work and home whenever needed. Indeed, previous research has argued that individuals with multiple roles are likely to have permeable boundaries (Staines, 1980). Though men and women with children both operate in multiple roles, even today, women are more likely to take on responsibility for household and childcare tasks. Kossek, Noe and DeMarr (1999:111) therefore propose that ‘employed women are more likely to use a strategy for work family role synthesis having lower work-family boundary separation than employed men’. Hall (1972) suggested that men take upon their roles sequentially - work first, family later -, whilst women take upon their roles simultaneously. The number of dependents however does not correlate to high home permeability for both men and women (Campbell Clark 2002a,b; Olson-Buchanan & Boswell, 2006).

In sum, women with care responsibilities may be more inclined to have permeable home boundaries that allow them to fulfill work and home demands simultaneously than men. Given that previous research indicates that men and women with care responsibilities may arrange the permeability of the home domain differently, it is important to examine if the relation between permeability and WTF conflict operates differently for men and women who combine work with the care for children.

**Boundary preferences and the relation between home permeability and WTF Conflict**

Permeable boundaries may be desired by some, and undesired by others. Consciously and subconsciously individuals have preferences with respect to the extent that work and home may or may not integrate, and where and when to draw the line (Nippert-Eng 1996a; Campbell Clark, 2000). For instance, employees might be willing to telecommute from home, but may draw the line at taking work related phone calls after six o’clock in the evening.

Neither integration nor separation is desirable for all employees (Ashforth et al, 2000; Burk, 2004). There is little research on why some employees prefer to integrate work and home, whereas others prefer to keep the two strictly separated. The main objective of employees in desiring integration or separation is to minimize difficulty in combining work and home (Ashforth et al, 2000; Rau & Hyland, 2002). Employees strive to combine work and home in such a way that is most beneficial for them and comes with the lowest cost and effort. Some employees prefer to integrate work and home (Nippert-Eng, 1996a); for them permeability may be a tool to
minimize WTF conflict. Others prefer to separate home from work; impermeable boundaries may serve now as a tool to minimize WTF conflict. Clay (1995) found that women who have children or others to care for prefer more integration than men. Chapter two suggested that for some employees having home responsibilities induced a preference for the integration of work in home life (these were mostly male employees), whilst for other (female) employees home responsibilities induced a preference for separation. Working in a high level job and attaching great importance to work were also found to be related with a preference for permeable boundaries. In contrast, experiencing a reorganization as negative induced a preference for separation.

Although employees to some extent have a choice on how they manage work and home, their environments may cause a discrepancy between preference and enactment (Rothbard, Phillips & Dumas, 2005). Thus, employees may prefer separation, but have permeable home boundaries in reality. Earlier we found that boundary preferences do not serve as counter pressures to work characteristics that enhance permeability: employees who prefer separation but who do bring their work home by telecommuting, cannot avoid permeable home boundaries (chapter three). This implies that someone with a permeable home boundary does not necessarily wish to receive work related phone calls or to think of work. It might very well be that she prefers not to perform work activities in the evening, but that work conditions force her to do so anyway.

Previous studies have explored the consequences of a discrepancy between employees’ preferences and the opportunity that employers offer to integrate or separate through policies and supplies. Edwards and Rothbard (1999) found that the correspondence between employees’ preferences and the actual extent of integration or separation, predicted their well-being. They found that the well-being of employees who preferred separation increased when their work situation enabled separation. However, when employees were able to keep work and family more separated than they desired, well-being diminished. In addition, findings of Kreiner (2006) indicate that a correspondence between the boundary preferences of employees and the supplies as offered by their work situation reduces the extent of Work Home Conflict and stress, and increases job satisfaction.

All in all, earlier research suggests that when boundary preferences and the opportunity to separate or integrate by means of workplace supplies do not correspond, WFC may increase. This study contributes to existing research, by studying the impact of boundary preferences on the relation between the actual boundary permeability and WTF conflict. Based on previous literature, we expect that the impact of permeability on WTF conflict will depend on the boundary preferences of employees; in this we hypothesize that the more employees prefer to separate, the stronger the impact of permeability on WTF conflict will be.
Hypothesis 1: The more employees prefer impermeable home boundaries that allow for separation, the more impact home permeability has on WTF conflict.

Hypothesis 2: Permeability has less impact on WTF conflict for women with children than for men with children

DATA AND METHOD

Data collection
This study is based on a case study of a Dutch multinational in the public and business services. Previous research found that whether employees integrate or separate work and home, relates to their work arrangements, job culture, and work content – white collar versus blue collar - (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 employees working in lower jobs mostly do not (Nippert-Eng, 1996a; Breedveld, 1998). Thus, we aimed for an organization with much variety in knowledge based versus industrial, manual work. A single case study enabled us to analyze boundary behavior of employees with different opportunities to integrate and separate, while promoting comparability of other work and organizational characteristics.

The multinational is over hundred years old, employs more than 20,000 people and is one of the leading and largest corporations of the Netherlands. In its long history it has made the transition from a traditional industry to a dynamic international operating multinational. Many of the older employees have experienced this transformation or recall stories of parents and grandparents who worked for the organization as well. Many employees feel a strong commitment to the organization; however in recent years reorganizations caused agitation for some. Although the reorganizations have taken place frequently, the organization is not an exceptional case within the Dutch labor market. In recent years, many major organizations gone through extensive reorganizations.

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. Within each department, employees work in low and high level jobs, though the percentages vary (4 to 32% for low level jobs, 24 to 53% for higher level jobs). We were able to approach the entire working population of three departments due to their small personnel (a total of 1,270 employees). In the fourth and largest department - with a total workforce of 7,525 employees - we selected
respondents by means of a singular stratified sample, whereby women and very low and very high job levels were oversampled considering their under representation in the organization. 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 for this study.

**Sample**
The final sample consisted of 66.6% men and 33.4% women (M = 1.33, SD = .47). Respondents ranged in age from 18 to 70 years old, with a mean of 43 years old (SD = 8.72). Most of the men and women (84.8%) have a partner, of which 63.5% are married (SD = .94). Most of the respondents have children (66.6%, SD = .46). 56.8% of the respondents have one or more children living at home, varying in the age of 0 to 27 (M = 9.37, SD = 7.06). Men have more often children (M = 7.2) than women (M = 6.0, t = 3.7, p < .01). Job levels ranged from 4 to 13 (M = 9.25, SD = 2.47) on a scale of 4 till 13. Employees working in job levels 4-8 (39.5%) are mainly in manual and administrative jobs; employees working in job levels 9-13 are mainly in management or other knowledge work (60.6%). The average tenure is 18 years; ranging from a few months to 43 years (SD =10.3). In the sample women, lower job levels and higher job levels are purposively overrepresented considering the statistical power in the multivariate analyses.

**Operationalizations**
Table 4.1 presents the operationalizations as used in this chapter. The dependent variable work-to-family conflict (WTF conflict) was measured by Netemeyer, Boles, & McMurrian’s 5-item scale (1996). Respondents were asked to rate their responses on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’. Responses to the 5 items were averaged to form a total score (α = .87), high scores indicating high levels of WTF conflict.
Table 4.1 Operationalizations of this chapter

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Alpha reliability</th>
<th>Factor analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>work-to-family conflict</strong></td>
<td>.87</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The demands of my work interfere with my home and family life.</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The amount of time my job takes up makes it difficult to fulfill family responsibilities.</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things I want to do at home do not get done because of the demands my job puts on me.</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My job produces strain that makes it difficult to fulfill family and home duties(^{17}).</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due to work related duties, I have to make changes to my plans for family activities.</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>home permeability</strong></td>
<td>.81</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I receive work-related phone calls when I am at home.</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have work-related items at my home.</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think about work-related concerns when I am at home.</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I hear from people related to my job when I am at home.</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I stop in the middle of my home activities to address a work issue.</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I take care of work-related business when I am at home.</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Boundary preferences for the home domain</strong></td>
<td>.88</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t like thinking about work when I’m home.</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would prefer keeping my job and private life separate.</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t like work issues creeping into my home life.</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like to be able to leave work behind when I go home.</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would prefer to keep work life at work when I leave my work place.</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Home boundary permeability* was measured using Campbell Clarks’ 6-item permeability scale (Campbell Clark, 2002a). Respondents rated their responses on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from ‘never’ to ‘always’. Responses to the 6 items were averaged to form a total score ($\alpha = .81$), high scores indicating high permeability.

*Boundary preferences for the home domain* favoring integration or separation, was measured using a 5-item scale in Likert form, ranging from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’, and averaged to determine a total score ($\alpha = .76$), high scores indicating a preference for integration.

\(^{17}\) In the fourth item, the word ‘home’ was included for respondents without an inhabiting family.
agree’. Three items were used from Kreiner’s\textsuperscript{18} (2001) scale on ‘internal boundary permeability needs’. A Principal Component Analysis (PCA) and Cronbach’s reliability analysis showed the additional value of two extra items of our own. The PCA showed a single component that explains for 68% of the total variance. Factor loadings vary between .76 en .86 with an internal consistency reliability $\alpha = .88$. The responses to the 5 items were averaged to form a single score. High scores indicate a strong preference for separation.

In the first section, we discussed several variables that were identified in previous research as related to WFC conflict. For this reason, gender, having a partner, having children, job level and the number of working hours by contract were included as control variables in this study. Besides, bivariate correlations show the need for controlling for negative reorganization experiences. A dummy variable is adopted indicating (strong) agreement with the item “I had a negative feeling about this or other reorganizations”.

Analyses
First a description is given of the extent of WTF conflict, the home permeability and the boundary preferences of the respondents in this data set. We briefly describe which employees prefer to separate or integrate work and home, which employees have permeable or impermeable home boundaries and which employees experience high or low levels of WTF conflict. Variance analyses were performed to test whether employees with diverging boundary preferences differ with respect to permeability and WTF conflict. Bivariate correlations were computed to explore potentially confounding correlations and detect multicollinearity.

Next, multiple ordinary least squares (OLS) regression analyses were performed to test hypothesis 1 and hypothesis 2. In each step a new (group of) variable(s) was added. First, the control variables were entered; next the variable home permeability.

Since hypothesis 1 aims to examine the effect of permeability on WTF conflict under the condition of boundary preferences, an interaction term was constructed. However, multicollinearity showed to be a serious problem with bivariate correlations between the interaction term and its single components of $r = .97$, $p < .01$ and VIF as high as 18.7, (Lewis-Beck, 1980; Myers, 1990). Centering the independent variables can be seen as a solution to reduce multicollinearity, while keeping the total of explained variance ($R^2$) unaffected (Cronbach, 1987). However, it is stated as well that centering may not genuinely affect multicollinearity; multicollinearity implies simply a lack of information and centering may not solve this (Brambor,

\textsuperscript{18}Kreiner, G.E. (2001). On the edge of identity: Boundary conflict and workplace fit. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Arizona State University. One item was omitted from the analysis due the missing of a large number of observations (n=111): ‘I would prefer not to take any work home at the end of the workday.’
Roberts Clark & Golder, 2006). The fact that the variable boundary preferences is skewed, and thus offers less variation, may support this argument.

Given that the beneficial effect of centering is debatable, we chose not to adopt an interaction term but to conduct regression analyses separately for employees with diverging boundary preferences. Whereas an interaction term tests the effect of a whole variable, categorizing enabled us to show the differences in effects for employees with scores in the middle and on both ends. This is of special significance since the variable boundary preferences is skewed. Thus, categorizing enabled us to show information that may be invisible when adopting an interaction term. As the aim of this study is not to demonstrate the results and procedures of two diverging methodological approaches, we chose not to show analyses for both the interaction term and the categorized variables in order to avoid confusion. Similarly, to add to clarity, we categorized men and women with and without children to test hypothesis 2.

To be able to perform separate regression analyses for employees who prefer to integrate and for those who prefer to separate, we categorized the scale boundary preferences in three dummy variables. As mentioned earlier, the scale ranges from 1-5 (reported answers of the 5 items are added up and then again divided by 5 to form a total score). The score 3.00 is the theoretical middle point (n=105). The middle category (n=527) was formed around the theoretical middle point and the mean (3.5), ranging from 2.8 to 3.8 (Median: 3.5, Mode: 4). Category 1 indicates a preference for integration and ranges from 1.00 to 2.5 (n=157). Category 3 indicates a preference for separation and ranges from 4.0 to 5.0 (n=319). Since the scale boundary preferences is a continuous scale, ranging from a preference for integration to a preference for separation, boundaries between categories are not sharply edged and results should therefore be interpreted with caution.

As mentioned above, separate analyses were performed for men and women with and without children to examine hypothesis 2. Unfortunately we were not able to examine the interaction effect of boundary preferences on the relationship between permeability and WTF conflict for men and women separately, since only 32 female employees prefer integration. Therefore, in testing hypothesis 2, we controlled for hypothesis 1; the effect of boundary preferences.
RESULTS

Descriptives

WTF conflict
On average the employees report minimal WTF conflict (M=2.4, SD=.76). 17.4 % experiences very little WTF conflict. The majority of the employees report little to medium levels of WTF conflict (58.2 %). 20.5 % reports medium to high levels of WTF conflict. Only 3.9 % of the respondents experience very much conflict because of work entering home life.

Consistent with some previous research (Frone et al., 1992b; Eagle et al., 1997), independent-samples t-tests show that men and women do not significantly differ in the extent that they experience WTF conflict. However, when we perform a separate analysis for men and women with children, the t-test shows that men report slightly more WTF conflict than women (t = 2.8, p<0.05). A separate t-test for men and women without children shows again no difference for men and women in experiencing WTF conflict. T-tests and bivariate correlations further show that – contrary to findings of previous research (e.g. Grzywatch & Marks, 2000) - the age of children and the number of children that live at home do not significantly correlate with more conflict, for neither men nor women.

Consistent with previous research (e.g. Duxbury et al., 1994) there is no difference in WTF conflict for employees with a partner and those without a partner. Older employees report slightly less conflict (r = -.06, p<0.05). Men working in high level jobs experience more WTF conflict (r = .15, p<0.01). In contrast women working in high level jobs do not experience more conflict. Consistent with results of previous research (e.g. Gutek et al., 1991), women who work more than 32 hours a week, experience more WTF conflict (t = 3.6, p<0.01); men who work more than 32 hours a week do not report significantly more conflict.

Permeability of the home boundaries
Consistent with previous research (Ashforth et al., 2000), fully permeable or impermeable home boundaries are rare: only 1.9% of the respondents has fully permeable boundaries, although fully impermeable home boundaries are more common (11.7 %). Most respondents allow work to enter their homes to some degree, though the extent varies. 49.8 % has often an impermeable home boundary: they seldom receive work related phone calls when they are at home, think rarely of work at home, rarely engage in work activities and when they are in the middle of home activities they seldom stop to perform a work task. In contrast, for 36.6 % of the employees this is not an exception but occurs regularly: they have often permeable home boundaries.
Chapter two showed that some employees continuously allow some work aspects in their home lives and reject other aspects - for example preparing work at home, but limiting availability after working hours. Others open their boundaries for a short period, for instance just before a deadline, to tighten it afterwards. Work permeates into home life mostly by thinking of work (86.8 %, sometimes to always) or performing work task (61.4 % sometimes to always).

Independent-samples t-tests show that in contrast to the proposition of Kossek et al (1999:111) employed women will more likely use a strategy for work family role synthesis, we found that men allow work to enter their homes slightly more than women (t = 5.2, p<0.01). Women who have children have less permeable home boundaries (M=2.5, t = 6.8, p <.01), then men (M=2.8) with children. However, women without children have slightly more permeable home boundaries (M=2.7) then men without children (M=2.6), though the difference is not significant. Men with children have significantly more permeable home boundaries (2.8) than their male co-workers who have no children (M=2.6, t = 4.2, p < .01). In contrast, women who are mothers have significantly less permeable home boundaries (2.5) than their female co-workers who have no children (M=2.7, t = -2.8, p < .05).

For neither men nor women is the age of the youngest child significantly related to the permeability of the home domain nor is - consistent with results of e.g. Campbell Clark, (2002a) - the number of children who are living at home. Respondents with a partner have slightly more permeable boundaries than those without a partner (t = 2.0, p<0.05). Bivariate correlations further show that home permeability does not vary with age. Home permeability does vary with job level (F = 24.1, p<0.01); employees (male/female) in higher job levels have more permeable home boundaries than employees working in lower job levels (r =.18 p<0.01). Finally, employees who work according to their contracts’ 32 hours or more per week, have more permeable boundaries then their co-workers who work less (M= 2.4, t = 6.0, p<0.01).

Boundary preferences
The majority of the employees, 52,5%, prefers neither integration nor separation, though tend slightly towards separation (M:3.5, Median 3.6, Mode 4). 31,8 % prefers to separate work from home, whereas only 15,7% prefers integration. Inconsistent with previous research (Clay, 1995; Kossek et al., 1999), an independent t-test shows that women in our data prefer less permeable home boundaries than men (t =-3.56, p <.01), though the difference is very small. T-tests further show that for both men and women, having children is not significantly related to their boundary preferences. Below we will discuss the three categories of boundary preferences in more detail.
The ‘category’ of employees who prefer to integrate (n=157) consists of 123 men and 32 women (missing n= 2). This category consists of more men than the total sample (12%). The mean age of the employees is 43 years. By far the most of them have a partner (84,7%) and have children (70,7%). The youngest child that lives at home is on average 9 years old. Compared to the total sample, this group of employees works in relatively high job levels: 68,3% works in job levels 10-13 compared to 45,6% of the total sample. 8,1% works in job levels 4-6 (18,1% in the total sample) and 23,6% works in medium job levels 7-9 (31,5 % in the total sample). The employees work by contract 36,8 hours per week on average and 42,7 hours including overtime.

The largest category, the employees who prefer neither integration nor separation (527), includes 346 men and 177 women; this reflects the total sample. Again, the employees are on average 43 years old. Again most of the employees have a partner (86,3%) and have children (68,6%). The youngest child that lives at home is on average 8 years old. In this, these employees resemble the employees who prefer separation. Compared to the integration category, these employees work in relatively lower level jobs; though the majority still works in level 10-13: 48,5% (68,3% in the integration category, 45,6% in the total sample). 35,7% work in medium level jobs (compared to 23,6% of the employees who prefer integration and 31,5% in the total sample) and 15,8% in low level jobs (compared to 8,1% of the employees who prefer integration and 18,1% in the total sample). These employees work by contract a little less than the employees who prefer integration (35,5 hours per week on average; the integration category 36,8 hours) and work less hours overtime: 40 compared to 42,7 of the integration category.

The category of employees who prefer separation (319), includes 192 men and 122 women (missing n= 5). Compared to the total sample and the employees who prefer to integrate, this category includes considerably more women. The employees are on average 44 years old; this reflects both the total sample and employees who prefer integration. 84 % of the employees have a partner; this resembles the two other categories. The employees who prefer separation less often have children: 62% (compared to 68,6% of employees with in-between preferences and 70,7% of employees who prefer integration). The youngest child that lives at home is on average 8 years old. Whereas employees with a preference for integration work in relatively high level jobs, this category works mostly in relatively low level jobs (30,1 % compared to 8,1% of the integration category and 18,1% of the total sample). 34,8% work in medium level jobs (23,6% in the integration category and 31,5% in the total sample) and work less in high level jobs: 35,1%, compared to 68,3% works in the integration category and 45,6% in the total sample. These

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19 In the year 2004.
employees work by contract a little less than employees who prefer to integrate (35.1 hours per week on average; the integration category 36.8 hours) and work less hours overtime: 38 compared to 42.7 of the integration category.

Variance analyses (One-Way Anova) were performed to test whether the three categories differ with respect to permeability and WTF conflict. Since Levene’s test showed that the population variances of the three categories are different and sample sizes are unequal, a Games-Howell test was performed. The variance analyses show that employees who prefer to integrate (n=157), who prefer neither integration nor separation (n=527) and who prefer to separate (n=319), differ significantly from each other with respect to the degree of home permeability (F(2,1000) = 44.3, p <0.01) and the level of WTF conflict (F(2,995)= 12.3, p <0.01). Employees who prefer integration have more permeable home boundaries (Mean Difference = .20, p<0.05) and less WTF conflict (MD= -.16, p<0.05) than employees with in-between preferences. Employees who prefer integration differ more strongly from their co-workers who prefer separation; they have more permeable home boundaries (MD = .50, p<0.05) and less WTF conflict (MD = -.35, p<0.05). Employees who prefer to separate have less permeable boundaries MD = -.30, p<0.05) and report more WTF conflict (MD = .19, p<0.05) than employees with in-between preferences.

Correlations
Table 4.2 provides the means, standard deviations and the correlations for all variables. WTF conflict is positively correlated with home permeability (non-centered) and boundary preferences. Bivariate correlation between home permeability and WTF conflict is below multicollinearity levels, which supports the notion that home permeability and WTF conflict are not synonymous. Home permeability is negatively correlated with boundary preferences.
4.2 Means, standard deviations and intercorrelations of the present study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Sex (man)</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Partner (yes)</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.10**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Having child(ren) (yes)</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>.11**</td>
<td>.23**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Job level</td>
<td>8.48</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>.14**</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Weekly working hours by contract</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>.52**</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-.19**</td>
<td>.15**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Neg. reorganization experience</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>-.07*</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-.22**</td>
<td>-.11**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. WTF conflict</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>-.00</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.07*</td>
<td>.13**</td>
<td>.16**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Home permeability</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>.16**</td>
<td>.06*</td>
<td>.07*</td>
<td>.18**</td>
<td>.24**</td>
<td>-.10**</td>
<td>.31**</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Boundary preference for separation</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>-.11**</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.06*</td>
<td>-.18**</td>
<td>-.10**</td>
<td>.33**</td>
<td>.16**</td>
<td>-.34**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Pearson correlations are significant at \( p < .01 **\) or \( p < .05 * \)

For men, WTF conflict is positively related to boundary preferences for separation \( (r = .19, p < .01) \). In contrast, there is no significant relation between WTF conflict and boundary preferences for women. The correlation between permeability and boundary preferences is stronger for men \( (r = -.34, p < .01) \) than for women \( (r = -.29, p < .01) \). The age of a youngest child did not relate to WTF conflict, nor to employees’ boundary preferences (Clay, 1995). This lack of significant relation remains when correlations are performed separately for men and women.

**Regression analyses**

*Hypothesis 1* tested if permeability has a different effect on WTF conflict for employees with diverging boundary preferences. Separate regressions were conducted for each category of boundary preferences: 1) employees who prefer to integrate work in their home lives, 2) employees who prefer neither integration nor separation, and 3) employees who prefer to separate home from work. Table 4.3 presents the results of the regression analyses and reports the non standardized and standardized regression coefficient, the F-value and the adjusted R square.
Table 4.3 The effect of home permeability on WTF conflict for categories of boundary preferences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent variables</th>
<th>Preference for integration</th>
<th>Neither clear preference for integration nor for separation</th>
<th>Preference for separation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>β</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control variables:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex (man)</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>-.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner (yes)</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>-.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having child(ren) (yes)</td>
<td>-.21</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td>.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job level</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly hours by contract</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative reorganization experience</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.21*</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home permeability</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>.23*</td>
<td>.46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adjusted $R^2$. .09 .16 .19
F 2.9 13.9 10.4
N 144 475 286

Note. * $p<.05$, ** $p <.01$

Results show that gender only has a significant effect on WTF conflict for employees who have neither a clear preference for integration nor separation; men experience slightly less conflict than women. Job level has only a significant effect on WTF conflict for employees with in-between preferences as well; employees working in high level jobs experience significantly more WTF conflict than their co-workers working in lower level jobs. Experiencing a reorganization as negative has a stronger positive effect on WTF for employees who prefer to separate than for employees with in-between preferences and who prefer to integrate.

Controlling for the demographic variables, results show that, home permeability has a positive influence on WTF conflict for all employees. However, the strength of the effect differs considerably. For employees who prefer to integrate (n=157), permeability has a small effect on WTF conflict. For employees with in-between preferences (n=527), permeability has a stronger effect on WTF conflict; while for employees who prefer to separate (n=319), permeability has the strongest positive effect on WTF conflict. Consistent with hypothesis 1, results suggest that the more employees prefer to separate home from work, the more impact home permeability has on WTF conflict.
Next, we tested *hypothesis 2* and tested the effect of home permeability on WTF conflict for men and women with and without children. Before testing hypothesis 2, we conducted a separate analysis for men and women while controlling for the effect of children, to examine whether the effect of permeability on WTF conflict differs at all for men and women. In this, we controlled for the effects of - in this order - having a partner, children, job level, number of working hours, negative reorganization experiences and boundary preferences. Results show that permeability has a strong positive influence on WTF conflict for men (B=.54, *p*<.01, not shown in table). For women, permeability has a positive effect on WTF conflict as well, though it is weaker (B=.40, *p*<.01). Thus, the impact of home permeability is different for men and women; for men permeability contributes more strongly to WTF than for women.

For testing hypothesis 2, we conducted separate analyses for men and women with and without children, to examine whether adding ‘having children’ to the analysis influences the relation between permeability and WTF conflict for men and women. The analyses were performed for 497 men with children and 196 without children, and 209 women with children and 137 women who have no children. All control variables as mentioned above, except for having children, are entered in the first model. Home permeability is added in the second model. First, we conducted separate analyses for men and women without children. Second, we performed separate analyses for men and women who do have children and tested hypothesis 2. Finally, we explored the within gender differences to show how women with children differ from women without children with respect to the relation permeability-WTF conflict, and similarly, how men with children differ from men without children. Table 4.4 shows the results of the full model.
Table 4.4  The effect of home permeability on WTF conflict for men and women with and without children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent variables</th>
<th>Men without children</th>
<th>Women without children</th>
<th>Men with children</th>
<th>Women with children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>β</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>β</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control variables:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner (yes)</td>
<td>-.17</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>-.24</td>
<td>-.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job level</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly hours by contract</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative reorganization experience</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.14*</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.19*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boundary preferences</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>.29**</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home permeability</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>.46**</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>.32**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted $R^2$</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>497</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. * $p<.05$, ** $p <.01$

Of the selected control variables, a preference for separation contributes significantly to WTF conflict for men without children, as does negatively experiencing a re-organization. Job level and contractual working hours are not significantly related to WTF conflict. For women without children, experiencing a reorganization as negative contributes positively to WTF conflict. In contrast to men without children, boundary preferences are not significantly related. For men without children, permeability has a very strong positive effect on WTF conflict. For women without children, permeability has a positive, but weaker effect on WTF conflict20.

Next, separate analyses are conducted for both men and women who have children. Results of the control variables show that for men with children a negative reorganization experience increases WTF conflict. A preference for separation is positively related to WTF

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20 An exploratory analysis shows however, that if we do not control for boundary preferences, the effect of permeability on WTF conflict is almost similar for men and women without children ($β=.35$, $B =.49$ $p<.01$ for men, $β=.32$, $B = .48$ $p<.01$ for women). Thus, controlling for boundary preferences increases the effect of permeability on WTF conflict for men without children. This is especially interesting since model 1 showed that boundary preferences do not significantly relate to WTF conflict; moreover model 2 showed that the relation between preferences and WTF conflict does become significant when permeability is added to the analysis.
conflict as does - slightly - working in a high job level. For women with children, only working many hours and boundary preferences are significantly - but weakly - related to WTF conflict.

Hypothesis 2 presumed an interaction effect of having children and gender, and predicted that permeability has less impact on WTF conflict for women who have children than for men who have children. Consistent with the hypothesis, results show that the effect of permeability on WTF conflict is weaker for women with children than for men with children. For both men and women with children, permeability is strongly related to WTF conflict, though permeability results more often in WTF conflict for men with children than for women. However, because we were not able to adopt interaction terms we do not know whether these differences between men and women are significant.

Next, we explored the within gender differences for both men and women. Results show that the positive effect of permeability on WTF conflict is weaker for men with children than it is for their co-workers without children. Thus, men without children experience more conflict because of permeability than their co-workers who are fathers. Similarly, women who do have children experience less conflict because of permeability than their female co-workers without children and less than men with children.

To summarize, a separate analysis for men and women in which we controlled for the effect of having children, shows that the impact of home permeability on WTF conflict is different for men and women. That is, the relation between home permeability and WTF conflict is stronger for men than for women. When we perform separate analyses for men and women and differentiate between having children and not having children, results indicate that for men – both fathers and non-fathers – permeability has an overall stronger effect on WTF conflict. Within gender differences show that for both men and women, permeability results less often in WTF conflict if they have children.

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study analyzed the role of boundary preferences on the relation between home permeability and WTF conflict. Further, this study examined if the relation between permeability and WTF conflict is different for men and women who combine their work with the care of children.

Consistent with previous research (Campbell Clark, 2002a,b; Olson-Buchanan & Boswell, 2006) our data showed a positive relation between home permeability and WTF conflict. The more permeable employees’ home boundaries are, the more WTF conflict they
report. However, we expected that the impact of permeability on WTF conflict depends on the boundary preferences of employees. Moreover, we expected that the more employees prefer to separate home from work, the stronger the impact of permeability on WTF conflict would be.

Therefore, hypothesis 1 stated that the more employees prefer separation, the more impact home permeability has on WTF conflict. Regression analyses, in which employees are categorized according to their boundary preferences, do indeed support the notion that the effect of permeability on WTF conflict is different for employees who prefer to separate home from work and for employees who prefer to integrate the two. For employees who prefer integration, permeability has a small effect on WTF conflict. In contrast, for employees who prefer separation permeability does have a strong effect on WTF conflict.

The boundary preferences of our respondents relate to the sociological order of gender and job level. Employees who prefer integration are mostly male and work in high job levels. In contrast, employees who prefer separation are often female and work in low job levels. Previous research found that many managers of high level employees control the boundaries between work and home of their employees. Employees in high job levels are coerced to loosen the – mainly temporal – boundaries between work and home (Perlow 1998); whereas employees working in low job levels still have less access to arrangements that lower the boundaries between work and home, such as telecommuting or flextime (Breedveld, 1998; Swanberg, Pitt-Catsouphes, Drescher-Burke, 2005). Thus, the boundary preferences of employees correspond to, or are adapted to their work situation.

Based on these results, we would like to argue that in order to examine the effect of integration (promoting policies) on WTF conflict employees’ boundary preferences should be included. After all, permeability may have a different effect on employees who prefer integration and on those who prefer separation. Earlier research already indicated that preferences and permeability do not always correspond (Rothbard, Phillips & Dumas, 2005). Thus, employees could have permeable home boundaries while preferring separation. Previous research did not find significant relations between a strategy favoring integration and WTF conflict21 (Kossek, Lautsch, & Eaton, 2006). However, this chapter did not discriminate between preferences and permeability behavior but included both concepts in a single scale. Inclusion of both preferences and permeability as separate concepts could provide different or additional results.

Further, the results support the argumentation that integration may not necessarily reduce WTF conflict (Hill, Miller, Weiner & Colihan, 1998; Ashforth et al 2000; Kossek et al., 2006). Many modern work arrangements promote integration, based on the rationale that by integrating...

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21 They did find significant relations between a strategy favouring integration and FTW conflict.
work and home it becomes possible to fulfill demands of both work and home whenever needed - and thus to reduce WFC. This study supports the notion that family friendly policies that aim at integration (such as telecommuting, Rau & Hyland, 2002) can have a downside if employees prefer separation (Rothbard, Phillips & Dumas, 2005; Kreiner, 2006).

Finally, in previous research the concepts permeability and WTF conflict have been interchangeably used, and one is defined by the other (Frone et al., 1992b; De Lay, 1995; Eagle, et al., 1998). Our data supports however the notion that permeability and WTF conflict are not synonyms. That is, while permeability may be a necessary precondition for WTF conflict, permeability does not inevitably result in WTF conflict. When permeability is desired, it gives less cause for an increase of WTF conflict. Consequently, permeability and WTF conflict should not be used as synonym concepts in research.

Next, we tested hypothesis 2 and explored if the relation between home permeability and WTF conflict is different for men and women with and without the task of combining work with the care for children. First, we examined if the impact of home permeability on WTF conflict is different for men and women respectively, while controlling for having children and boundary preferences. Results indicated that for both men and women permeability has a strong positive influence on WTF conflict, though permeability contributes more strongly to WTF for men than for women.

Since previous research indicated that men and women who combine work with the care for children arrange the permeability of their homes differently, we conducted separate analyses for men and women with and without children. Results show that if men and women do not have children, they combine work and home in more or less a similar way; they have equally permeable home boundaries. Women without children have slightly more - though non-significant - permeable home boundaries then their male co-workers without children.

The birth of children divides the way men and women cope with both work and home. Having children is a turning point in the lives of men and women and this is reflected in the permeability of their home boundaries. In contrast to previous research (Clay, 1995; Kossek, Noe & deMarr, 1999), descriptives showed that women do not lessen the boundaries between work and home when they have children, but men do. Women with children strengthen the boundaries of their homes and the home becomes more dedicated to one purpose: family life. Male employees with children do just the opposite: they have more permeable home boundaries than their male co-workers without children. An explanation could be that before male employees have children they work their extra hours at the office; when they become fathers they work
overtime in their homes in order to see their children, and thus increase the permeability of their homes.

National differences may explain why our Dutch female respondents decreased the permeability of their home boundaries, whereas previous studies found that women increase the permeability of their home boundaries. Many Dutch women cope with the combination of work and care tasks by decreasing their working hours. In many of these part-time jobs - sometimes a shared full-time job – there is little need to bring work home, and thus for permeable home boundaries. Indeed, our Dutch female respondents who have children work considerably less than their female co-workers who do not have children. Men do not alter the amount of hours that they work when they have children. In fact, they work slightly more\(^2\). Though the role behavior of many of our female respondents can be described as quite conservative; the high permeable home boundaries of men may be the result of a more modern role behavior in which men take up more care responsibilities (Coltrane, 1996).

Hypothesis 2 proposed that the effect of permeability on WTF conflict is lower for women than for men when they have children. Thus, we expected that an interaction effect between gender and having children impacts the relation between permeability and WTF conflict. Though the home permeability of men and women without children is similar, for men permeability results more often in conflict than for women. When employees do have children, men have more permeable home boundaries than women, and again the effect of permeability on WTF conflict is stronger for men than for women. Thus, consistent with hypothesis 2, our results indicate that home permeability has less impact on WTF conflict for women than for men with children. Men are more likely to experience WTF conflict because of permeability than women in any case: without children, with children and when we controlled for the effects of children.

Unless employees prefer to integrate, hypothesis 1 showed that permeability results in WTF conflict for many employees. Results of hypothesis 2 add to this finding that permeable home boundaries can be beneficial – or at least less harmful - when employees have to juggle the combination of work and the care of their children. Having children does alter the impact of permeability on WTF conflict: for both men and women, permeability results less often in WTF conflict when they have children. These findings support the notion that integration can be beneficial for combining work and home.

Unfortunately, our sample consisted of not enough women who prefer to integrate, to examine the role of boundary preferences for men and women with have children. Since the boundary preferences of both men and women are not significantly related to having children,

\(^2\) Number of working hours, including overtime: Men without children M=41.8, with children =42.1, no significant difference. Women with children: m=30.7, without:40.6, t= -10.5
these preferences may not account for the differences of the effect of permeability on WTF conflict for both and women. However, the results suggest that having children does not alter the boundary preferences of employees, but does alter their permeability behavior.

Limitations
Some limitations of our study with respect to the data used and the operationalizations bring us to guidelines for future research. A single case study - as used in this study - is advantageous since it generates knowledge on particulars, promotes comparability of work characteristics, and synchronizes the situational context for the respondents. However, the hypotheses as tested in this chapter should be examined in other organizations in different sectors as well. Further, assessing causality is problematic, since we gathered data at one point in time. Longitudinal research is necessary to establish the causal dynamics in boundary management.

Furthermore, we examined the interaction effects proposed in this study by means of categorizing the independent variables boundary preferences, gender and having children. Though categorizing can be a solution for some methodological problems in this study, there are some limitations which require that the interpretation of our results be read as preliminary. First, categorization of boundary preferences is arbitrary, and no sharp edges exist between categories. Second, comparing differences between categories in the effect of permeability on WTF conflict is not a statistically tested, but B’s between the different models were compared. Thus, since we were not able to adopt an interaction term in the analysis, future research must examine the relation between boundary preferences, permeability and WTF conflict to a further extent.

Finally, it is important to note that other characteristics could play an additional role in the relationship between permeability and WTF conflict. Whether permeability results in conflict may very well depend on other work, home and individual characteristics as well. For instance, such as work-family culture or personality traits or characteristics of the partner could influence WTF conflict. Previous research has indicated that women experience more conflict if their partner has a highly salient work role (Beutell & Greenhause, 1982). Further, it is reasonable to presume that employees only prefer to integrate work in their homes, when they are inviting a pleasant enjoyable part of their lives in their homes. Thus, this could imply that for employees who prefer to separate, permeability leads to WTF conflict because disagreeable work aspects enter the home domain.