



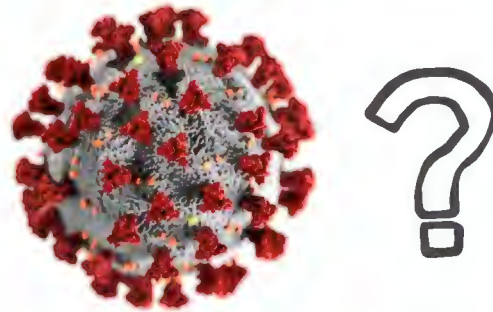
Work-home boundary role transitions: Telework before, during and after COVID-19

Dr. Joni Delanoëije

Work and Organisation Studies
Faculty of Economics and Business, KU Leuven



Introduction



Telework and boundary role transitions

Background



Background



- **Problem:** combining work with private life (Butts et al., 2013; Giardini & Kabst, 2018)
 - ♀ labor market participation, dual-earner & single parent families, norms
 - New generation: work-home balance + flexibility



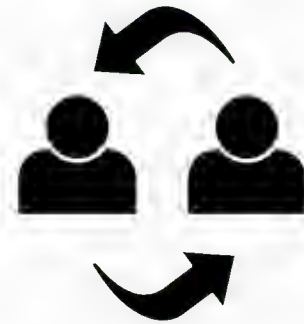
- **Answer:** new ways of working; e.g. home-based telework (Kossek et al., 2010)
 - Additional resources for employees (e.g., flexibility, time)
 - May lower interference of work with private life (↓ work-home conflict)



- **Relevance** for organizations? (Beauregard & Henry, 2009)
 - Attract/maintain healthy, well-performing workforce
 - ↓ stress, ↑ engagement, ↑ performance, ↑ retention
 - e.g. through ↓ work-home conflict



Background



SIGNALING FUNCTION

1. **Availability** of telework

- Social exchange: ↑ engagement, ↑ performance
- Family-friendly culture: ↓ stress, ↓ work-home conflict

➤ Consistent (Butts et al., 2013)



INSTRUMENTAL FUNCTION

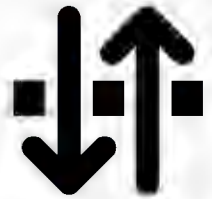
2. **Use** of telework

- Instrumental: ↓ work-home conflict leads to ↓ stress, ↑ engagement, ↑ performance

➤ Vastly inconclusive (Kelly et al., 2008; Kossek & Ozeki, 2008)

Boundary role transitions

- “Cognitive or behavioral switches between engagement in one’s work role and engagement in one’s home role, both during working from home and/or working at the office” (Ashforth et al. 2000)
- **Role theory & boundary theory**
 - Psychological/physical/behavioral boundaries around life roles
 - Degree of permeability
 - Ease with which (aspects of) other roles can cross boundaries
 - → “boundary role transitions”
- This permeability: likely to fluctuate from day to day!



Boundary role transitions

Work → home transition



Home → work transition

Telework and boundary role transitions

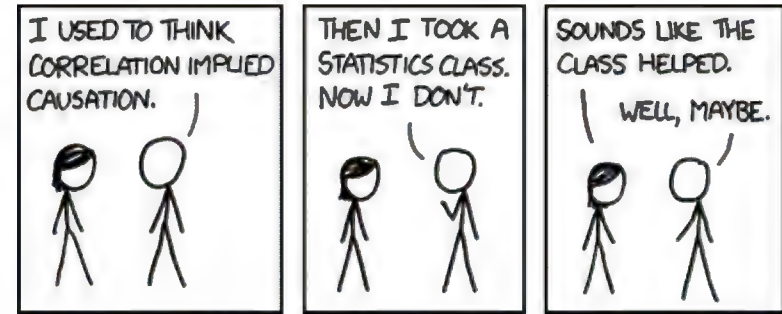
Our study (before COVID)

Delanoeije, J., Verbruggen, M., & Germeys, L., (2019). Boundary role transitions: A day-to-day approach to explain the effects of home-based telework on work-to-home conflict and home-to-work conflict. *Human Relations*, 72(12), 1843–1868. <http://doi.org/10.1177/0018726718823071>

Background

Research to date:

- Compare “teleworkers” with “non-teleworkers”
- General effects (i.e. one moment of measurement)



Current study:

- **Characteristics of use:** In line with employee preference?
- **Daily effects:** Important day-to-day fluctuating mechanisms?

Theory

Daily effects of telework on daily conflict: Why and for whom?

1. Inconsistent results
2. Not clear which process

(Allen et al., 2015; Butts et al., 2015)

MECHANISM? **DAILY BOUNDARY ROLE TRANSITIONS**

- | | |
|----------------------------|--|
| + Flexibility & autonomy → | ↓ work-to-home conflict (e.g., able to tackle home demands) |
| – Boundary blurring → | ↑ work-to-home conflict (e.g., roles at home are blurred) |
| – Home role saliency → | ↑ home-to-work conflict (e.g., interrupted at home while working) |

(Voydanoff, 2005; Golden et al., 2006; Allen et al., 2003)

Theory

Daily effects of telework on daily conflict: Why and for whom?

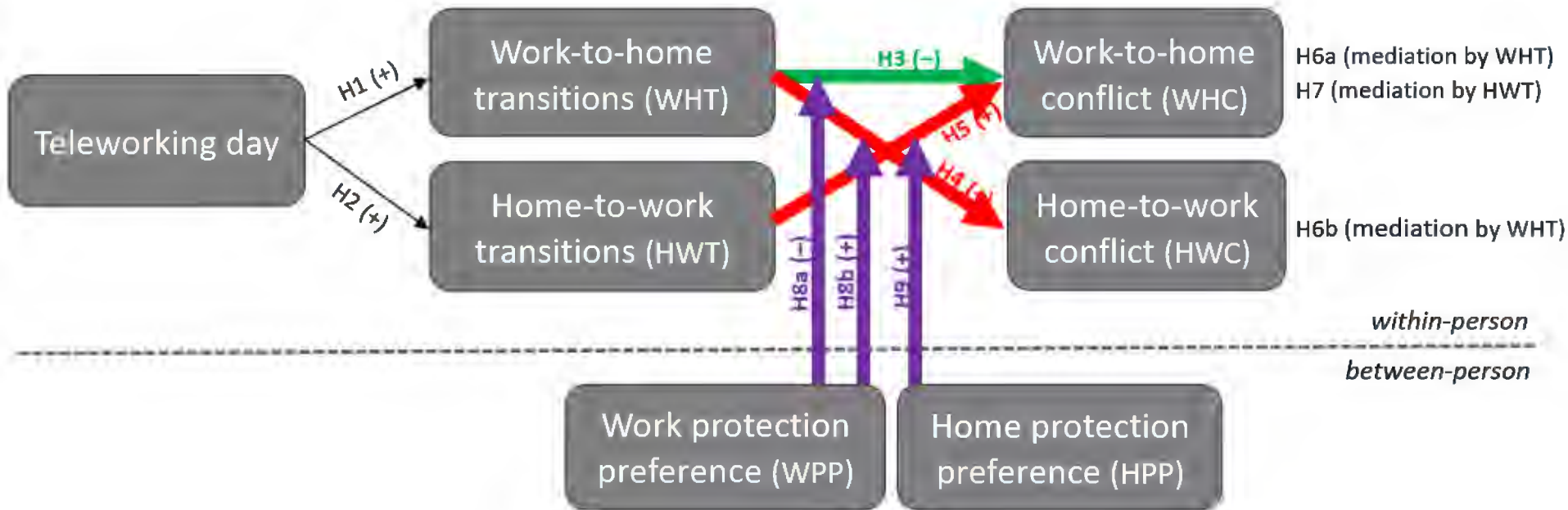
LEVEL OF ANALYSIS? **TEMPORAL ASPECT**

- Daily fluctuating conflict (Maertz & Boyaer, 2011)
- Daily work-home transitions as predictor for daily conflict (Hunter et al. 2017)

FOR WHOM? **SEGMENTATION PREFERENCES**

- Violation of preference → ↑ conflict (Ashforth et al., 2000; Kreiner, 2006)
- Preference direction (protect work vs. protect home) (e.g. Methot & Lepine, 2015)

Hypotheses



- **FLEXIBILITY** – boundary spanning resources
- **BOUNDARY BLURRING** – role confusion
- **PREFERENCE DEPENDENCY** – individual differences

Design & sample

General survey at T1 + short daily surveys (14 working days)

- Teleworkers and non-teleworkers



- Daily diary study ($N_{\text{respondents}} = 86$, $N_{\text{data points}} = 812$)
 - 57 teleworkers and 29 non-teleworkers; 14 consecutive working days
 - Average frequency working from home:
 - $N = 31 \rightarrow 1 \text{ day/week}$
 - $N = 14 \rightarrow 2 \text{ days/week}$
 - $N = 11 \rightarrow +2 \text{ days/week}$
- Sample:
 - 65% female
 - 35% professional workers, 21% clerks, 20% middle managers and 25% other
 - 1-4 children ($M = 1.9$, $SD = 0.8$); youngest max.11 ($M = 4.7$, $SD = 3.6$)

Measures

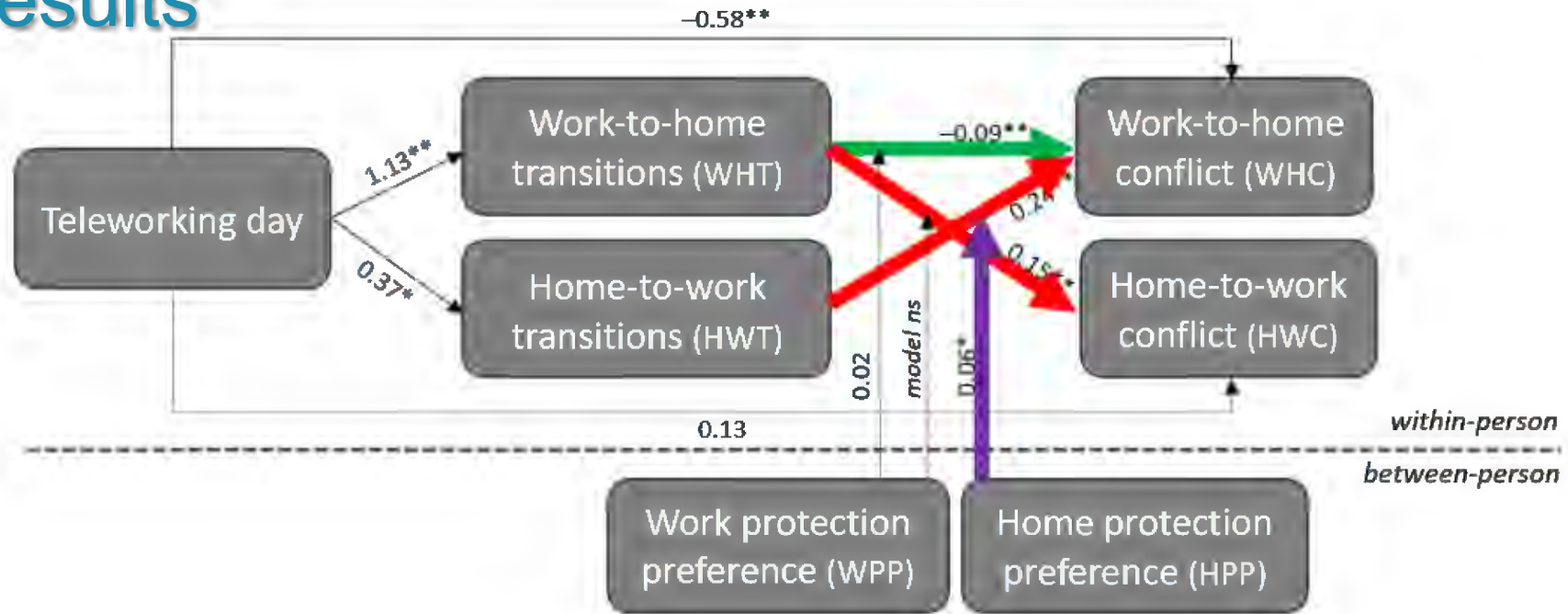
Trait measures (T1)

1. Teleworker: dummy; value 1 if teleworks at least 1 day a week; value 0 for non-teleworkers
 2. Home protection preference (Kreiner, 2006) 4 items; $\alpha = 0.86$
e.g. I prefer to keep work life at work
 3. Work protection preference (Methot & LePine, 2016) 4 items; $\alpha = 0.84$
e.g. I prefer to keep non-work life at home
- + Controls: gender, age, and number of children

State measures (daily)

1. Teleworking day: dummy; value 1 if worked at home during regular working hours
2. Work-to-home transitions (Matthews et al. 2010) 4 items, index scale
e.g. Today, I left during my lunch break to meet private life responsibilities
3. Home-to-work transitions (Matthews et al. 2010) 4 items, index scale
e.g. Today, I answered to work-related calls or e-mails outside working hours
4. Work-to-home conflict (Carlson et al., 2000) 4 items; $\alpha_{[D1-D13]} = [0.76; 0.92]$, $\alpha_M = 0.85$
e.g. Today, I had to miss activities at home due to the amount of time I had spent working

Results



1. Both conflict enhancing and conflict reducing pathways

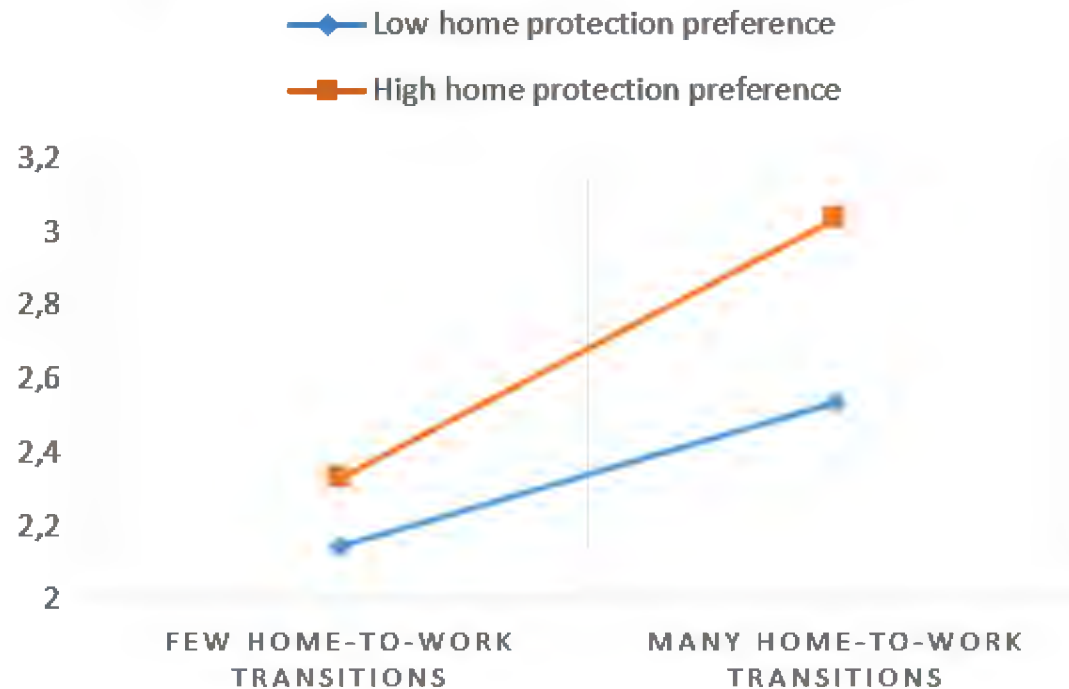
- **FLEXIBILITY:** work-home transitions are a resource
- **ROLE BLURRING:** work-home transitions are a disturbance
 - **PREFERENCE:** even more when employees prefer to protect home domain!

2. Impact of telework on work-home conflict different from day to day

- Explained by boundary role transitions

Results

WORK-TO-HOME CONFLICT



Results: Telework and role transitions

- More boundary role transitions on teleworking days
 - Both more work-to-home transitions and home-to-work transitions
 - Work-to-home transitions decrease work-to-home conflict (Independent of work protection preference)
 - Work-to-home transitions increase home-to-work conflict
 - Home-to-work transitions increase work-to-home conflict
 - Stronger for those with high **home** protection preference
- **Enhanced flexibility**
 - **Role blurring**
 - **Preference matters**
- Less work-to-home conflict on teleworking days
 - No difference in home-to-work conflict



Contributions

Theoretical

1. Simultaneously model conflict-enhancing and -reducing pathway
→ Transitions not necessarily harmful or resource depleting
2. Daily approach to understand dynamics telework, transitions & conflicts

Practical

- When evaluating telework:
 - Both benefits (enhanced flexibility) and risks (role blurring)
 - *Net effect is beneficial: make home-based telework available?*
 - Take into account employee preferences
 - *Employee counseling?*

Telework and boundary role transitions

Future: What after COVID?



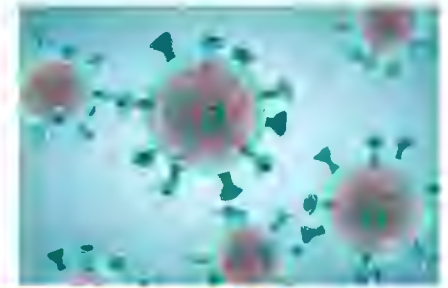
Opportunities & pitfalls



		Opportunities	Pitfalls
Well-being	<i>Mental</i>	Detachment, work-home balance	Unwanted role transitions; colleagues; overwork
	<i>Physical</i>	Healthy physical activity	No change of scenery; no commuting
Performance	<i>Indirect</i>	Work-home combination	Inefficient team work, communication
	<i>Direct</i>	Concentration (colleagues)	Nuisance, unwanted work-home transitions

- ☐ Individual preferences
- ☐ Choice
- ☐ No pressure from work or home context
- ☐ Supervisor trust
- ☐ Experience with telework
- ☐ Curvilinear effect

COVID-19

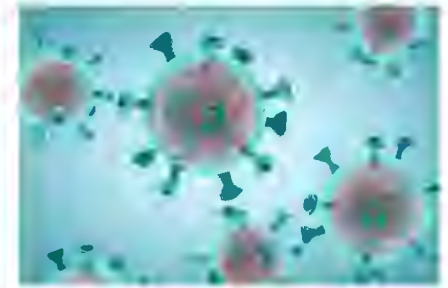


- × Suboptimal environment for preferences
- × No choice
- × Pressure from work, home or government
- × No trust (contrary: prove yourself)
- × No experience
- × Permanent

DURING
COVID

- ❑ Individual preferences
- ❑ Choice
- ❑ No pressure from work or home context
- ❑ Supervisor trust
- ❑ Experience with telework
- ❑ Curvilinear effect

COVID-19



- × Suboptimal environment for preferences
- × No choice
- × Pressure from work, home or government
- × No trust (contrary: prove yourself)
- × No experience
- × Permanent

DURING
COVID

Impact of boundary role transitions? In which context?

AFTER
COVID?

- Individual preferences
- Choice
- No pressure from work or home context
- Supervisor trust
- Experience with telework
- Curvilinear effect



So what?



Conclusion

➡ Expand teleworkers versus non-teleworkers focus

- **HOW (MUCH)** people work
- Working from home

How people **PSYCHOLOGICALLY EXPERIENCE** work

=/= **individuals**: preferences

=/= **contexts**: work; home

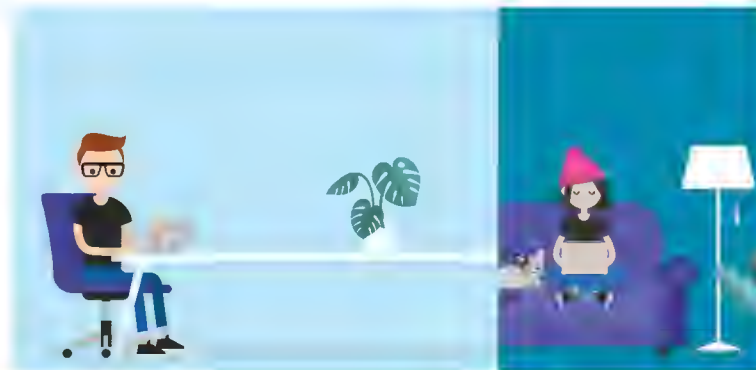
=/= **moments**: daily fluctuating role transitions

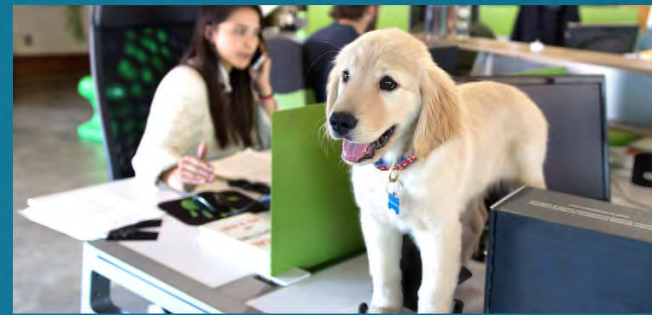
“Flexibility enactment theory”

(Kossek, Lautsch & Eaton, 2005)

~ informal and change processes

(Rapoport et al., 2002)





Thank you

jon.delanoetje@kuleuven.be



Main aim

➤ Identify conditions under which telework aids (or harms) employees

- Individual **preferences** (e.g., Demerouti et al., 2014)
 - Preference to protect home from work interruptions
- **Contextual** features (e.g., Allen, Renn & Griffeth, 2003)
 - Impact of home context: salient during telework



➤ Address methodological shortcomings in doing so

- **Daily effects** above general effects (e.g., Maertz & Boyar, 2011)
 - What happens on teleworking days compared to office days?
- Propose daily **mechanism** (e.g., Ashforth, Kreiner & Fugate, 2000)
 - Work-home boundary role transitions



Theory

Does telework help employees to lower work-home conflicts?

1. Inconsistent **results**
2. Not clear **which process**

(Kelly et al., 2008; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007)

We propose: **TEMPORAL ASPECT + BOUNDARY ROLE TRANSITIONS**

1. Daily fluctuating conflict: **daily episodic** approach (Maertz & Boyaer, 2011)
 - Proposed in literature, yet no research for telework
2. **Work-home transitions** as predictor for conflict (Carlson et al., 2014)
 - May help to help to understand how telework affects work-home conflict
(Allen et al., 2003; Shumate & Fulk, 2004)

Theory

Role and boundary theory (Ashforth et al., 2000)



- Roles have boundaries: switching roles = crossing boundaries

- Telework **blurs boundaries** between work role and home role (Allen et al., 2003)
 - + Role transitions enable employees to reconcile work and home demands
(Ashforth et al., 2000; Carlson et al., 2000; Vodyanoff, 2005)
 - Role transitions lead to role ambiguity and confusion (co-located roles)
(Ashforth et al. 2000. Gajendran & Harrison, 2007)

e.g. Extended working time into evening: + and/or -

(Hill et al., 1998; Greer & Payne, 2004)

1. **Enhanced flexibility:** ↑ **work-to-home** transitions

- ↓ work-to-home conflict

2. **Role confusion:** ↑ **home-to-work** transitions

- ↑ work-to-home conflict

Theory

Role and boundary theory (Ashforth et al., 2000)



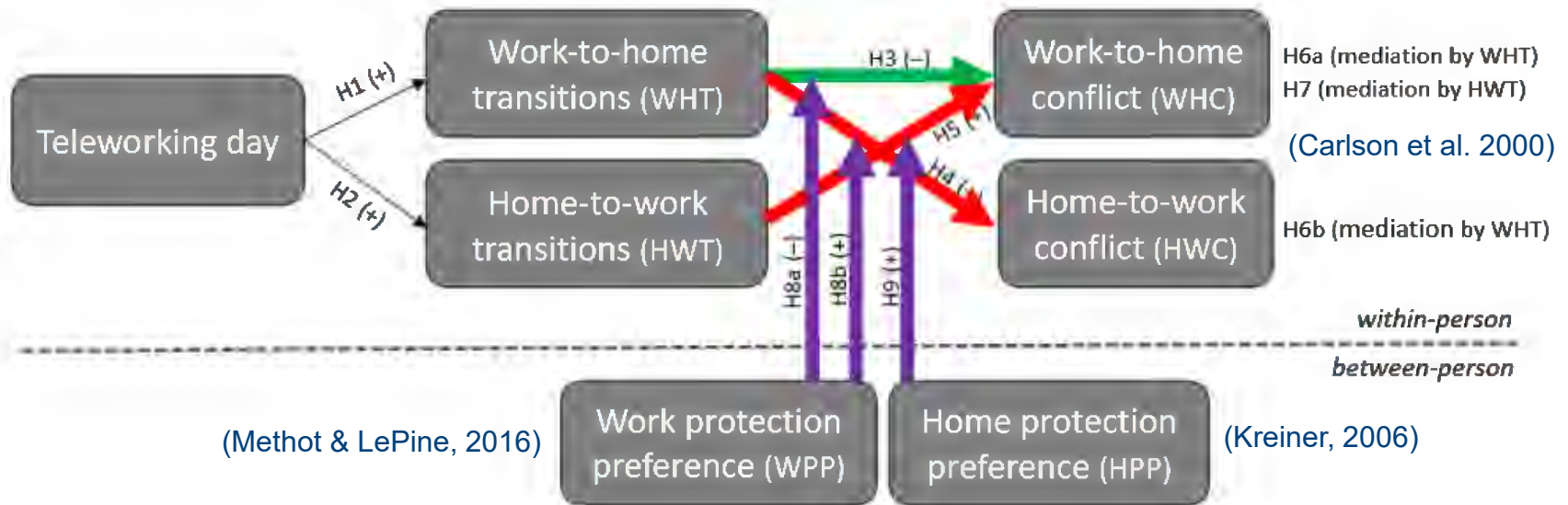
- Roles have boundaries: switching roles = crossing boundaries

- **Individual differences** in preference to keep work and home separated
(Ashforth et al., 2000; Kreiner, 2006; Rothbard et al., 2005)
 - For “separators” role transitions more detrimental than for “integrators”
(Chen et al., 2009; Derks et al., 2016; Gadeyne et al. 2018, Kreiner et al., 2009)
 - Direction of preference matters (protect work vs. protect home from intrusions)
(Kossek & Lautsch 2012; Methot & Lepine, 2015; Powell & Greenhaus, 2007)

- 3. **Boundary preferences:** effects dependent on preference
 - Preference will moderate effects of transitions on conflict

Hypotheses

- FLEXIBILITY – boundary spanning resources
- BOUNDARY BLURRING – role confusion
- PREFERENCE DEPENDENT – individual diff.



WORK-TO-HOME TRANSITIONS (1 = Not applicable at all ; 7 = Fully applicable) (Matthews et al., 2010)

- (1) Today, I left during my lunch break to meet home responsibilities
- (2) Today, I interrupted my work to meet a home responsibility (like making a dentist or doctor appointment)
- (3) Today, I answered calls or replied to e-mails from family members or friends while working
- (4) Today, I changed the hours I worked to tackle home issues

HOME-TO-WORK TRANSITIONS (1 = Not applicable at all ; 7 = Fully applicable) (Matthews et al., 2010)

- (1) Today, I answered to work-related calls or e-mails outside work hours
- (2) Today, I stopped what I was doing after work hours to call work or to send a work-related mail
- (3) Today, I changed plans at home to meet work-related responsibilities
- (4) Today, I have gone into work to meet work responsibilities outside work hours

Analysis

- Two-level model:
 1. Repeated measurements (daily variables), $N = 812$ measurement occasions
 2. Individuals, $N = 86$ respondents
- Nested observations (i.e., days nested within people) → mixed coefficient modeling (MCM)
- Restricted maximum likelihood (REML) estimation as missing data treatment
- Cross-level effects: centered level one predictor variables to the individual mean and level two predictor variables to the grand mean (Aguinis et al., 2013)

Descriptives

Table 1. Means, standard deviations and correlations among the study's variables.

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Gender (1 = female)	0.35	0.48												
2. Age	36.53	5.57	.16											
3. Number of children	1.94	0.78	.09	.31**										
4. Job autonomy	4.84	1.20	.29*	.03	-.17									
5. Telework frequency	1.07	1.01	.21	.21	.21	.14								
6. Teleworker (1 = yes)	0.65	0.48	.20	.15	.11	.24*	.78**							
7. Teleworking day (1 = yes)	0.49	0.35	-.14	.16	.04	-.11	.48**	.31**						
8. Work-to-home transitions	2.70	1.04	.11	-.05	.13	.08	.43**	.41**	.12					
9. Home-to-work transitions	2.27	1.23	.24**	.24**	.08	.16	.17	.07	.02	.19				
10. Work protection preference	3.65	1.35	.01	.05	-.04	-.14	-.02	.08	.04	-.06	.09			
11. Home protection preference	4.22	1.44	-.07	-.17	-.13	-.24*	-.28*	-.20	-.15	.01	-.20	.35**		
12. Work-to-home conflict	2.18	1.09	-.06	.04	-.05	.00	-.21	-.20	.10	.67*	.40**	.23**	.19	
13. Home-to-work conflict	1.79	0.92	.03	-.07	.09	-.09	.03	.06	-.04	.35**	.06	.21	.22*	.48**

**p < 0.01, *p < 0.05. N = 81 persons and N = 678 occasions. M = Mean. SD = Standard deviation. Means are on a 1–7 Likert scale, except for age (years), telework and gender (dummies), children (number) and telework frequency (1–3 Likert). Correlations between daily variables are person-mean centered (i.e. based on averaged scores across all measurement occasions per person).

Results

Table 2. Global fit indices and model comparison for the corresponding models using ML estimation.

	d.f.	AIC	BIC	−logLik	Comparison	L ratio
Work-to-home conflict						
1. General linear model	2	2420.14	2429.18	1208.07		
2. Null model	3	2246.49	2260.04	1120.24	2 vs 1	175.65**
3. Controls only model	9	2254.07	2294.75	1118.04	3 vs 2	4.41
4. Main effects only model	13	2193.73	2252.47	1083.86	4 vs 2	72.76**
5. Full model with interactions	16	2170.16	2242.47	1069.08	5 vs 4	29.56**
Home-to-work conflict						
1. General linear model	2	2087.57	2096.61	1041.79		
2. Null model	3	1788.10	1801.6	891.05	2 vs 1	301.47**
3. Controls only model	9	1797.53	1838.20	889.77	3 vs 2	2.57
4. Main effects only model	11	1746.20	1795.91	862.10	4 vs 2	57.91**
5. Full model with interaction	13	1747.91	1806.65	860.95	5 vs 4	2.29

** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$. $N = 81$ persons and $N = 678$ occasions. ML estimation because models with different fixed effects cannot be meaningfully compared using REML estimation (Wood, 2011).

Table 3. Random coefficient modeling results to predict work-to-home transitions (Model 1), home-to-work transitions (Model 2), work-to-home conflict (Model 3) and home-to-work conflict (Model 4).

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	Work-to-home transitions		Home-to-work transitions		Work-to-home conflict		Home-to-work conflict	
	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE
Intercept	2.21**	0.27	2.33**	0.34	2.32	0.30	1.28**	0.25
Gender (0 = male, 1 = female)	0.08	0.24	0.47	0.30	-0.16	0.25	0.09	0.22
Age	-0.03	0.02	0.04	0.03	-0.00	0.02	-0.02	0.02
Children	0.10	0.15	-0.03	0.19	0.04	0.15	0.10	0.13
Job autonomy	0.00	0.10	0.12	0.12	0.10	0.10	-0.04	0.09
Telework frequency	0.06	0.17	0.19	0.22	0.11	0.18	-0.09	0.16
Teleworker	0.32	0.36	-0.48	0.46	-0.38	0.38	0.01	0.33
Teleworking day	1.13**	0.14	0.37**	0.14	-0.58**	0.12	0.13	0.09
Work-to-home transitions (WHT)					-0.09**	0.03	0.15**	0.02
Home-to-work transitions (HWT)					0.24**	0.03		
Home protection preference (HPP)					0.08	0.11	0.13	0.07
Work protection preference (WPP)					-0.01	0.10		
WHT x WPP					0.02	0.02	NS	NS
HWT x HPP					0.06*	0.02		
Variance level 2 (employee)	0.79 (31%)		1.30 (45%)		0.92 (42%)		0.69 (52%)	
Variance level 1 (day)	1.81 (69%)		1.60 (55%)		1.28 (58%)		0.62 (48%)	

** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$. $N = 81$ persons and $N = 678$ occasions. NS = model not significant. Age, children, job autonomy, telework frequency, WPP and HPP are centered (grand mean centered). WHT and HWT are not centered (person-mean centered) as they also function as outcomes in the moderated mediation model.

Results

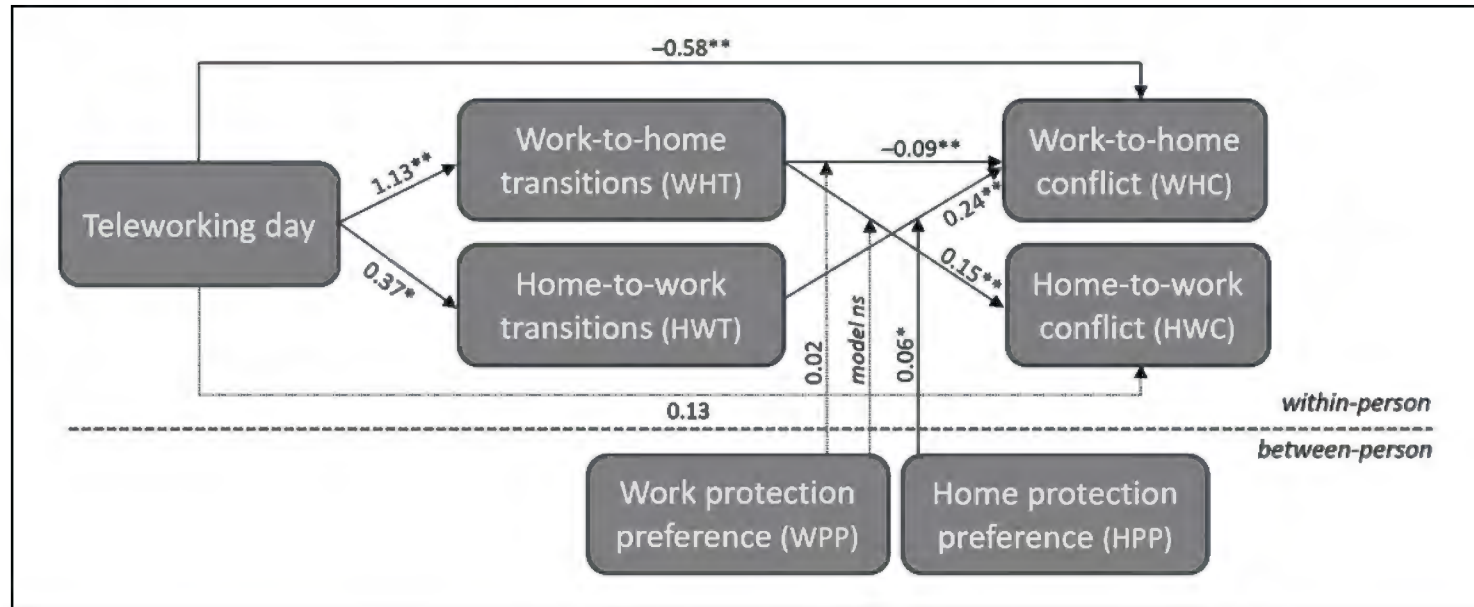


Figure 2. Regression coefficients for the relationships in our moderated mediation models to predict work-to-home conflict and home-to-work conflict. The hypothesized moderation model to predict home-to-work conflict was not significant, thus regression coefficients for this model with no cross-level interaction effect is shown. The regression coefficients between teleworking day and home-to-work conflict and home-to-work conflict controlling for work-to-home transitions and home-to-work transitions (i.e. the direct effects) are given in the figure. ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.

Gender

ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
ST_segprefWL	Between Groups	,377	1	,377	,176	,676
	Within Groups	180,501	84	2,149		
	Total	180,879	85			
ST_segprefLW	Between Groups	,073	1	,073	,037	,849
	Within Groups	166,358	84	1,980		
	Total	166,430	85			