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ALL IN A DAY'S WORK: BOUNDARIES AND MICRO ROLE TRANSITIONS

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We focus on everyday role transitions involving home, work, and other places. Transitions are boundary-crossing activities, where one exits and enters roles by surmounting role boundaries. Roles can be arrayed on a continuum, spanning high segmentation to high integration. Segmentation decreases role blurring but increases the magnitude of change, rendering boundary crossing more difficult; crossing often is facilitated by rites of passage. Integration decreases the magnitude of change but increases blurring, rendering boundary creation and maintenance more difficult; this challenge often is surmounted by boundary work.

I try to leave this place behind when I go home at night. That's one of the therapeutic things about having a long drive home. If I needed only five minutes to get home, I might spend a good deal more time thinking about things. You have to try to have some life other than here (a cardiologist; quoted in Yalof, 1988: 84).

I was feeling very keenly a sense of intrusion into my house. I had my . . . family around me and my work was a bothersome knock at the door . . . couriers showing up, a telephone line ringing, a fax machine going in the middle of the night . . . [I thought] that this was not . . . a pristine environment, that I had sullied it . . . I want[ed] this house to be ours, not part of my work (a telecommuter; quoted in Mirchandani, 1998: 178).

It has been argued that industrialized society is moving toward a greater proliferation and institutionalization of roles (Katz & Kahn, 1978; Ritzer, 1996). For example, in the twentieth century health clubs, nursing homes, summer camps, day care centers, dating services, and so on formalized tasks that were once performed informally in the home or neighborhood, thereby creating social roles, such as health club member and nursing home patient. Everyday life is increasingly mediated through formal roles in organizational settings.

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Although scholars have focused on the nature of interrole conflict (e.g., Kossek & Ozeki, 1998), relatively few have focused on the nature of *role transitions*—that is, the psychological (and, where relevant, physical) movement between roles, including disengagement from one role (*role exit*) and engagement in another (*role entry*; Burr, 1972; Richter, 1984). For example, how does a new parent change diapers in the morning and run a department in the afternoon? How does a manager enact the role of boss toward her subordinates and then enact the role of subordinate toward her boss? These often abrupt transitions may be difficult to accomplish, and people frequently lament having to “wear different hats” and “shift gears.”

Thus, our central question is *how do individuals engage in daily role transitions as part of their organizational life?* We focus on the transition process, developing propositions regarding the psychological (and, if relevant, physical) movement between roles. Using what we will call “boundary theory” as a framework, we describe role transitions as a *boundary-crossing activity*, where one exits and enters roles by surmounting boundaries (Schein, 1971; Van Maanen, 1982). We focus on “micro” transitions—that is, frequent and usually recurring transitions, such as the commute between home and work—rather than on “macro” transitions—infrequent and often permanent changes, such as a promotion or retirement (see Ashford & Taylor, 1990, and Stephens, 1994, for examples of macro transition models). We illustrate our

model with examples from the three major domains of everyday role transitions involving work: (1) work-home transitions (i.e., commuting and home-based work), (2) work-work or at-work transitions (e.g., between one's roles of subordinate, peer, superordinate, and organizational representative; between multiple jobs [moonlighting]), and (3) work-"third place" transitions (i.e., between work and other social domains, such as a church, health club, and neighborhood bar).¹

Katz and Kahn characterize a role as "the building block of social systems and the summation of the requirements with which such systems confront their members as individuals" (1978: 219-220). To gain greater precision, we partition this definition into one's position ("role"; cf. Biddle, 1979) and the "requirements" attached to that position ("role identity"; defined in more detail later). Further, because the requirements depend largely on the particular "role sender" (Katz & Kahn, 1978), a change in role senders is often tantamount to a change in role identity. For example, a manager may enact the "subrole" of boss vis-à-vis her subordinates, of subordinate vis-à-vis her own boss, and of coworker vis-à-vis her peers. Thus, our model of the role transition process encompasses changes in roles and subroles.

Four assumptions should be noted. First, for the sake of parsimony, we assume that roles are more or less stable (i.e., have relatively established boundaries and content), rather than in flux, emergent, or under threat. Second, we assume that individuals vary in how many roles they prefer to enact and that they have some latitude over their role selection. Third, given the costs and benefits associated with segmenting one's roles versus integrating one's roles (described later), we assume that individuals vary in their preferences for segmentation versus integration—although few prefer complete segmentation or complete integration—and that they generally have some latitude over the degree to which they segment or integrate their roles. Fourth, we

assume that regardless of one's tendency to segment or integrate one's roles, one generally seeks to (1) minimize the difficulty of role transitions, where *difficulty* is defined as the effort required to become psychologically and physically disengaged from one role and re-engaged in another role (Burr, 1972),² and (2) minimize the frequency of undesired role interruptions. Our analysis centers on how individuals minimize the difficulty of role transitions and the frequency of undesired interruptions.

The article is divided into five sections. First, we outline our boundary framework and define the concepts of role boundary and role identity. Second, we argue that these concepts contribute to whether roles are relatively segmented or integrated. Segmentation and integration are each associated with certain costs and benefits that affect boundary creation, maintenance, and crossing. Third, we consider the impact of individual and contextual factors. Fourth, we argue that role transitions become less difficult over time as individuals develop transition scripts and role schemas. Fifth, we discuss implications for future research and practice.

BOUNDARIES AND IDENTITIES

In this section we explore the concept of boundary and argue that a role can be described in terms of its interface with the environment (role boundary) and its nature or content (role identity).

Boundary Creation, Maintenance, and Crossing

The literature on boundaries provides an overall framework for our argument. The con-

¹ Oldenburg defines third places as "the core settings of informal public life" (1997: 16). (First and second places refer to home and work.) We focus on third places lodged in organizational settings, such as churches and health clubs, to simplify our subsequent discussion of role boundary, role identity, and role transitions.

² We recognize that aspects of the transition process might be enjoyable, as suggested by the cardiologist in our opening quote. Nonetheless, consistent with the argument that people are "cognitive misers" (Fiske & Taylor, 1991), it seems likely that people generally prefer a relatively efficient (less difficult) transition to a relatively inefficient (more difficult) one. Indeed, the cardiologist prefers "a long drive home" precisely because it enables her to clear her mind so that she can arrive home ready to re-engage in her family and leisure roles, rather than ruminate over her work role. In this sense the drive home is actually a relatively efficient way of simultaneously facilitating a physical and psychological shift between roles.

cept of boundaries has been used in numerous disciplines to refer to the physical, temporal, emotional, cognitive, and/or relational limits that define entities as separate from one another. Political scientists use boundaries to define geopolitical areas, organization theorists speak of system boundaries, engineers use boundaries to demarcate physical properties, marketing scholars speak of boundary-spanning individuals and activities, and psychologists use boundaries to explain where the self begins and ends and to diagnose the health of interpersonal relationships.

According to what can loosely be described as "boundary theory" (Michaelsen & Johnson, 1997; Nippert-Eng, 1996a,b; Zerubavel, 1991), individuals create and maintain boundaries as a means of simplifying and ordering the environment. "Mental fences" (Zerubavel, 1991: 2) are erected around geographical areas, historical events, people, ideas, and so on that appear to be contiguous, similar, functionally related, or otherwise associated. The process results in the creation of slices of reality—domains—that have particular meaning for the individual(s) creating and maintaining the boundaries. "Home," "work," and "church" are examples of the social domains created by boundaries (Nippert-Eng, 1996a). The boundaries are real in the sense that the individual perceives them as such and acts as though they are real (cf. Weick, 1979). Although a given domain may be socially constructed and more or less institutionalized (e.g., people share a general consensus on what home means), Nippert-Eng (1996a,b) has shown that the boundaries around that domain are somewhat idiosyncratically constructed (e.g., one person allows home to cross over into work, whereas another keeps them separated). Further, by circumscribing domains, boundaries enable one to concentrate more on whatever domain is currently salient and less on other domains.

The act of creating and maintaining boundaries, however, complicates the act of crossing from one domain into another. When reality is partitioned into discrete domains, differences between the domains tend to emerge or become exaggerated (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995). For example, a geographical region may be subdivided by a border such that people north of the border are labeled as one group (e.g., nation, county) and people south of the border are la-

beled as another. The perception of a border enables each group to evolve more independently, perhaps becoming more differentiated in their respective political, economic, cultural, and social systems. Thus, crossing boundaries has been described metaphorically as crossing an abyss (Durkheim, 1965), as unfreezing—movement—freezing (Lewin, 1951), as crossing a bridge (Simmel, 1955), and as taking a cognitive leap between categories (Zerubavel, 1991).

Role Boundaries

Within and across the social domains of work, home, and third places, boundaries tend to be further drawn around roles. Roles tend to be associated with specific individuals who are labeled accordingly (e.g., employee, parent, parishioner). Thus, a *role boundary* refers to whatever delimits the perimeter—and thereby the scope—of a role. Given the more or less institutionalized nature of work, home, and third place domains, roles tend to be bounded in both space and time—that is, they are more relevant in certain physical locations and at certain times of the day and week.

Two key concepts affecting the process of micro role transitions are the *flexibility* and *permeability* of a given role boundary. Flexibility is the degree to which the spatial and temporal boundaries are pliable (Hall & Richter, 1988). A role with flexible boundaries can be enacted in various settings and at various times. For example, a man working in the family business might be called upon to play the role of son at any point or place during the day. Conversely, inflexible boundaries severely constrain when and where a role may be enacted (e.g., security guard). Permeability is the degree to which a role allows one to be physically located in the role's domain but psychologically and/or behaviorally involved in another role (Pleck, 1977; Richter, 1992). An employee who is able to accept personal calls and visits regularly has a permeable work role boundary. Conversely, an employee who has little opportunity (e.g., access, time) to attend to other roles has an impermeable boundary.

On the one hand, the flexibility and permeability of a role boundary might ameliorate interrole conflict by enabling the individual to undertake a role transition when necessary. For example, an employee may be able to leave

work early to deal with a problem at her church. On the other hand, the very looseness of the boundary might exacerbate conflict by creating confusion among the individual and members of his or her role sets as to which role is or should be most salient. The man working in the family business may be unsure whether to adopt the role of the supportive son or the critical colleague when appraising his parent's decisions (Kaslow & Kaslow, 1992).

Role Identities

To the extent that a role cues or connotes a certain persona—replete with specific goals, values, beliefs, norms, interaction styles, and time horizons—we can speak of a role-based identity or, simply, *role identity* (cf. McCall & Simmons, 1978; Stryker, 1980). Role identities are socially constructed definitions of self-in-role (this is who a role occupant is), consisting of core or central features and peripheral features. Core features tend to be important, necessary, or typical characteristics of the identity and more defining of the identity (Perry, 1997). For example, Greenhaus and Beutell suggest that the stereotypical managerial role identity emphasizes the core features of "self-reliance, emotional stability, aggressiveness, and objectivity" (1985: 81–82), whereas more peripheral features may include intelligence and charisma. Core and peripheral features also may include aspects of the context(s) that help situate the role identities, such as geographical location, role set members, and role status.

What makes role identities relevant to role transitions is the concept of "contrast"—that is, the number of core and peripheral features that differ between a pair of role identities and the extent of the differences, where core features are weighted more heavily (cf. Louis, 1980). For example, just as Greenhaus and Beutell note that the stereotypical managerial role identity emphasizes self-reliance, stability, and so on, they also note that a manager's family might expect him or her "to be warm, nurturant, emotional, and vulnerable in his or her interactions with them" (1985: 82). The greater this contrast between the role identities of manager and family member, the greater the magnitude of the transition from one role to the other and, thus, the potential difficulty of the transition. The difficulty lies in "switching cognitive gears" (Louis &

Sutton, 1991: 55): disengaging psychologically from the identity implied by one role and re-engaging in the dissimilar identity of a second role. In the words of one manager,

When I come home and try to get involved with my family I have a difficult time switching from my cognitive, directive management style to a more emotional, cooperative one. The very things I'm paid to do well at work create disaster for me at home . . . I guess I just don't know how to turn off directing everything and everyone (DeLong & DeLong, 1992: 171).

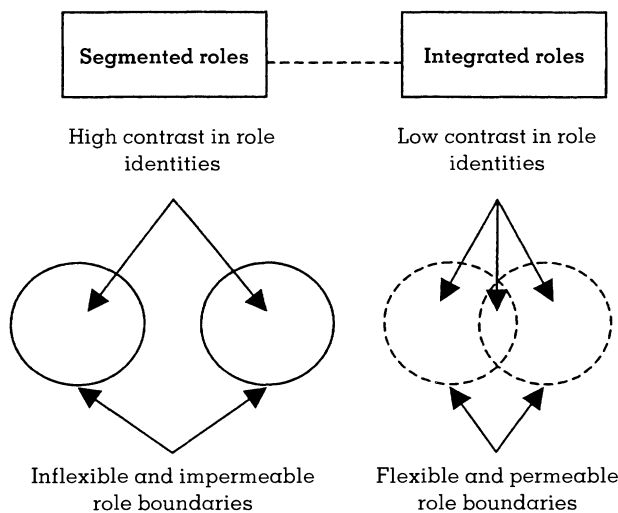
A high-magnitude transition may involve large changes in many core and peripheral features (relative discontinuity), whereas a low-magnitude transition may involve small changes in a few core and peripheral features (relative continuity). In between these two poles, various mixes of changes in core and peripheral features are possible. A transition of moderate magnitude may be the product of a few core features that change greatly (e.g., interacting with one's peers, rather than one's subordinates, may trigger different norms) or many core and peripheral features that change in small ways.

THE ROLE SEGMENTATION–ROLE INTEGRATION CONTINUUM

In this section we argue that combining the concepts of role boundary (flexibility and permeability) and role identity (contrast) indicates that a given pair of roles can be arrayed on a continuum, ranging from high segmentation to high integration. This continuum has been invoked by others when describing role boundaries. Nippert-Eng (1996a,b) found that individuals differ in the degree to which they segment or integrate their work and home roles. Similarly, Hartmann (1997) found that individuals vary in the degree to which they have "thick" (segmented) or "thin" (integrated) boundaries around roles and other categorizations.

Figure 1 illustrates how the concepts of flexibility, permeability, and contrast jointly define a given pair of roles as segmented or integrated. We elaborate below on the rationale for a segmentation-integration continuum. We also argue that high segmentation and integration each have "costs" and "benefits" associated with the creation, maintenance, and crossing of role boundaries.

FIGURE 1
The Role Segmentation–Role Integration
Continuum



Role Segmentation

Inflexible and impermeable role boundaries tend to be associated with relatively large differences in identities between roles. First, the more inflexible and impermeable the boundaries of a given pair of roles, the less likely that the roles' respective identities will "contaminate" one another. Lacking an open interface, there are few channels for the values, beliefs, and so on of one role to infuse those of the other. Second, the more inflexible and impermeable the boundaries of a given pair of roles, the more likely that the respective identities will tend to *diverge* over time (Shamir, 1992). Effectively sequestered, the identities may evolve independently, according to pressures from their respective contexts. Third, the greater the contrast between the identities of a given pair of roles, the more likely that relatively inflexible and impermeable boundaries will become institutionalized over time as a means of *preserving* the essence of each identity. The "mental fence" is drawn around each identity so that it becomes highly salient within its now-bounded context. Members of a weekly poker game, intent on the game itself, might develop strict norms against discussing work or home life matters.

Proposition 1: Role contrast tends to be negatively associated with role flexibility and role permeability.

As shown in Figure 1, roles that are highly differentiated (high contrast), tied to specific settings and times (inflexible), and permit few cross-role interruptions (impermeable) are highly segmented (Nippert-Eng, 1996a,b). Highly segmented roles tend to have little similarity between the contexts that inform each role and between the specific goals, values, beliefs, norms, interaction styles, and time horizons that constitute each role identity, and there tends to be minimal overlap in the physical location or the membership of the role sets. Given low boundary flexibility and low permeability, transitions between highly segmented roles tend to be relatively infrequent, although they might be quite predictable (e.g., a twice-a-day commute between home and work, a weekly visit to church).

Complete segmentation means that role identities and their respective contexts and role sets are mutually exclusive and perhaps even antithetical. This kind of Jekyll and Hyde dualism in roles is relatively rare, although examples do exist (Epstein, 1996). For example, members of highly stigmatized occupations, such as exotic dancer and garbage collector, have been known to conceal their occupation from their families, friends, and neighbors (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999).

Short of complete segmentation, high segmentation is most evident between the domains of work and home (where one commutes, rather than telecommutes) and work and third places. Indeed, according to the compensation model of work-family relationships, home and, presumably, third places may address social-psychological needs and desires not adequately addressed by work (e.g., Evans & Bartolomé, 1984; Oldenburg, 1997). High segmentation in the at-work domain is less evident, because work roles usually have the organizational context in common, together with whatever role identities are implied by that context. Nonetheless, examples do exist, particularly among internal and external boundary spanners who must interact with various constituencies with divergent and possibly conflicting goals (Adams, 1976). A classic example is provided by Morton Thiokol, the manufacturer of the faulty solid rocket booster that led to the explosion of the space shuttle Challenger. A senior engineer helped reverse a decision not to launch the Challenger when he was asked to "take off his engineering hat and

put on his management hat" (Presidential Commission; quoted in Ashforth & Mael, 1989: 30).

Costs and Benefits of Segmented Roles

We advance the argument in this section that the primary benefit of segmentation is that it reduces the *blurring* between roles, thus clarifying the nature of the transition. However, the primary cost is that the high contrast between roles increases the *magnitude* of the transition. Thus, the transition challenge in highly segmented roles lies in *crossing the role boundaries*: to psychologically (and, where relevant, physically) exit one role and enter the other.

Blurring between roles. Segmentation reduces blurring in three ways. First, because each role is associated with specific settings and times, there tend to be clear symbolic markers that both cue the appropriate identity and signal that identity to members of the relevant role set. A clerk entering an office building at the start of the workday, a hockey player stepping onto the ice, a factory worker punching a timeclock, and a working parent picking up his daughter from day care are subject to potent cues about the proper role identity to adopt. Indeed, the distinctive settings associated with schools, funeral homes, factories, and so on might have as much to do with signaling distinctive role identities as they do with functional necessity (Olins, 1989).

Second, because highly segmented roles tend to be relatively impermeable, role occupants are less concerned with being distracted by cross-role interruptions. Mandler's (1964, 1990) interruption/discrepancy theory would suggest this "peace of mind" enables the incumbent to more thoroughly and exclusively immerse him or herself in the role.

Third, because of the high contrast in segmented role identities, it is easier to psychologically compartmentalize the identities (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Goode, 1960; Nippert-Eng, 1996b). The strong differentiation between the goals, norms, geographical location, role set members, and so on associated with each role identity makes each appear to be a self-contained gestalt. For example, the role-appropriate aggressiveness of a police interrogator may have little psychological bearing on the role-appropriate sensitivity of that same person as a parent. With compartmentalization the interrogator/parent is

less likely to experience interrole conflict (at least in the long term³). The upshot is that when either the interrogator or parent role is cued, the individual is able to immerse herself more fully in the gestalt of the role. In sum, the absence of blurring between the roles—that is, the clarity of the differentiation and associated role boundaries—clarifies, in turn, the nature of the transition.

Magnitude of transition. High segmentation, however, renders the transition more difficult. The contrast in role identities means that there is more of a psychological and possibly physical gulf to bridge. Thus, although the interrogator may well understand that aggressiveness is no longer appropriate once she leaves the police station, it might be difficult at a visceral level to shed the aggressive identity of the interrogator in favor of the loving identity of the parent. Research on role "spillover" indicates that moods, stress, and thoughts that are generated in one role domain often influence or spill over into other domains (Marshall, Chadwick, & Marshall, 1992; Williams & Alliger, 1994). The greater the magnitude of the transition, the more likely that these epiphenomena of role experience will be inappropriate in the next role.

Further, by definition, a transition between highly segmented roles entails multiple boundary crossings, including temporal, physical, and/or social boundaries. For example, a retail salesperson must work certain hours (temporal) at the store (physical), interacting with customers and fellow employees (social). Thus, it may take substantial psychological and perhaps physical effort to move from one role to another. Accordingly, whereas segmentation decreases the difficulty of creating and maintaining role boundaries, it increases the difficulty of crossing role boundaries.

Proposition 2: The greater the role segmentation, the less difficult it tends to be to create and maintain role boundaries but the more difficult it tends to be to cross the role boundaries.

³ In the short term, prior to fully learning and adapting to the role identities, the discontinuity in identities is likely to be quite salient and experienced as jarring. See the later section entitled "Role Schemas."

Crossing Role Boundaries

Because of the magnitude of the transition between segmented roles, certain *rites of passage* tend to emerge to facilitate such transitions (Richter, 1990). Van Gennep (1960) defined rites of passage as rituals or ceremonies that facilitate movement of one or more individuals from one role to another. Rites may include the presence and involvement of others, the manipulation of emotionally charged symbols (e.g., settings, props, clothing), and more or less formulaic behavior. The rites signal, both to the individual and to members of the applicable role set(s), the change in roles and associated identities. Thus, the rites are particularly effective at facilitating movement where one's role identity changes greatly as one crosses the relevant boundaries. Although rites of passage are usually studied in conjunction with macro role transitions, such as a promotion (e.g., Trice & Morand, 1989), the rites are equally applicable to micro transitions, except that they signal a temporary, rather than permanent, change in roles.

Van Gennep's (1960) rites of passage comprise three types: rites of separation, which facilitate role exit; rites of transition, which facilitate psychological (and, if appropriate, physical) movement; and rites of incorporation, which facilitate role entry. In Figure 2 we integrate the role transition process with van Gennep's model.

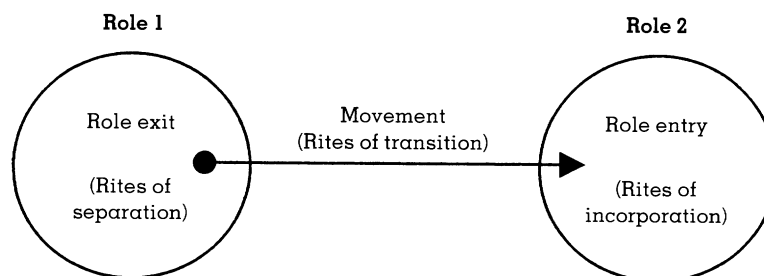
Role exit and rites of separation. Role exit involves psychologically and perhaps physically disengaging from the role. Role exit is triggered by external and/or internal cues. Common external cues include the calendar and clock (particularly given relatively inflexible and impermeable boundaries; Nippert-Eng, 1996a),

completion of a project or task, social signals and requests, and interruptions (although segmentation reduces their frequency). Common internal cues include "push" factors, such as a sense of closure, exhaustion, mood, guilt, and hunger and thirst, and the "pull" of the anticipated role to address push concerns or to otherwise provide a desired experience.

Role exit may be triggered and facilitated by rites of separation. For example, a commuter may begin to psychologically disengage from her home role and prepare for her work role by following her daily routine of showering, dressing in work attire, reading the business section of the newspaper over breakfast, and listening to traffic reports. The flow of the ritual creates a psychological momentum that effectively overcomes the inertia of the home role and eases her into the work role. Such "personalized" rites of separation are typically embedded within larger social (e.g., family, friends) and institutionalized rites of separation. For example, disengagement from work at the end of the day may be facilitated by a collective "winding down," where coworkers plan their next day's agenda, turn equipment off, rinse coffee mugs, and so on (Nippert-Eng, 1996b). Once the rites and psychological disengagement have begun, it may be very difficult to fully re-engage an individual in workplace issues, even if he or she is still physically present in the workplace.

Movement and rites of transition. This stage involves the psychological (and, if relevant, physical) movement between roles. Given the external/internal cues that precipitate role exit, it is often clear which role is to be entered (e.g., leaving home Monday morning for work). In-

FIGURE 2
The Role Transition Process for Segmented Roles^a



^a Segmented roles have higher magnitude of change and lower role blurring. The primary cost is in crossing role boundaries. The primary benefit is in creating and maintaining role boundaries.

deed, particular role exit and entry sequences frequently are routinized (see the later section entitled "Role Transitions Over Time"). If the exit cues are indeterminate ("Do I go to a movie or the club?"), expectancy theory indicates that one would enter the role with the highest anticipated valence (Vroom, 1964). However, unlike some of the momentous decisions researched in expectancy theory (e.g., selecting a job), the ephemeral nature of many micro role transitions likely means that the decision process unfolds in a relatively quick and muted form ("I'm more in the mood for a movie").

Psychological and physical movement are facilitated by rites of transition. Psychological preparation for role entry likely involves a combination of attention and arousal. The individual must adopt not only the appropriate cognitive frame (e.g., husband, employee, soccer coach) but the appropriate degree and nature of affective arousal. For example, some transitions may require heightened arousal (e.g., preparing for a presentation), achieved through a variety of means that are popularly known as "psyching up" (e.g., visualization, emotional labor, rehearsal; Hochschild, 1983; Murphy & Jowdy, 1992), whereas other transitions may require lowered arousal (e.g., dealing with an irate client), achieved through relaxation techniques (Orlick, 1980). This calibration of role, mind, and body has been described as "flow" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) and "ideal performance state" (Unestahl, 1986).

Various rites of transition might help regulate attention and arousal. For example, commuting can be viewed as a rite of transition involving temporal and spatial boundaries. Controlling for the variability in commuting time by car (caused by weather, traffic, and so forth), Kluger (1998) found a positive relationship between the length and enjoyment of the commute (see footnote 2). Enjoyment was operationalized as time to relax, time to think, valuable private time, conferring energy and waking one up, and reducing stress. Thus, a relatively long but smooth commute appears to provide a valued buffer between role identities (Hall, 1990).

Role entry and rites of incorporation. Role entry involves becoming psychologically and perhaps physically engaged in a role. Role entry is facilitated by rites of incorporation. For example, an individual may routinely visit a neighborhood bar for a drink after work. Exchanging

greetings and pleasantries with other patrons and having his "usual" drink poured may serve as strong signals for the individual that leisure time has commenced (Oldenburg, 1997). Ironically, the transition may be solidified by revisiting the prior role: recounting the day's activities may serve as a ritualistic means of summarizing and thereby attaining closure with the prior role.

In sum, the role segmentation associated with differentiated role identities and relatively inflexible and impermeable role boundaries makes crossing the boundaries problematic. Crossing entails a process of role exit–movement–role entry that is often facilitated by personal and collective rites of separation, transition, and incorporation.

Proposition 3: The greater the role segmentation, the more likely that role transitions will be associated with rites of passage.

Role Integration

At the opposite end of the continuum from high role segmentation is high role integration. As depicted in Figure 1, integration is denoted by roles that are weakly differentiated (low contrast), are not tied to specific places and times (flexible boundary), and allow cross-role interruptions (permeable boundary). Highly integrated roles tend to have similar identities, be embedded in similar contexts, and overlap in the physical location and the membership of the role sets. Given high boundary flexibility and permeability, transitions between highly integrated roles tend to be relatively frequent and perhaps unpredictable (e.g., a home-based worker taking time out to attend to a crying child).

Complete integration implies that there are virtually no differences between roles—only "a single, all-purpose mentality, one way of being, one amorphous self" (Nippert-Eng, 1996a: 568). Just as complete segmentation is rare, so too is complete integration. One example might be a member of a religious order living in a monastery or convent (Bruder, 1998).

High integration is far more common than complete integration. Examples that lend themselves to high integration are evident in all three transition domains: (1) in the work-home

domain, where one works at home or in a family business or is a member of a total institution, such as a prison or navy vessel (Goffman, 1961); (2) in the at-work domain, where one's work roles are subsumed under a single organizational context; (3) and in the work-third place domain, where one selects third places to reflect a work-based role identity (e.g., an executive joining a golf club) or vice versa, or where both work and third place role identities are manifestations of a more global identity (e.g., a religious individual who joins organizations reflecting his or her religious beliefs).

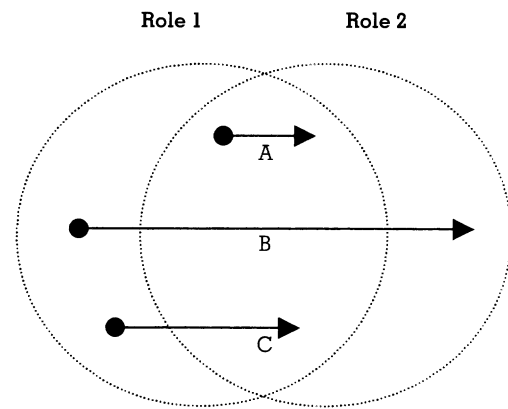
Costs and Benefits of Integrated Roles

In this section we argue that whereas the magnitude of the change between integrated roles is far less than between segmented roles, the blurring of the roles is far greater. Thus, the primary benefit of integrated roles is that the low magnitude of change simplifies the process of crossing role boundaries; conversely, the primary cost is that role blurring is far greater. Role blurring may foster confusion and interruptions such that the transition challenge for highly integrated roles lies in *creating and maintaining boundaries* between the roles.

Magnitude of transition. Given the low contrast between role identities and the flexibility and permeability of role boundaries, the transition process for highly integrated roles tends to be less difficult than for highly segmented roles. Thus, the transition process is less elaborate, and a given rite of passage may facilitate both role exit and role entry. For example, Ahrentzen (1990) found that home-based workers tend to engage in relatively simple rituals to get motivated to start work (e.g., have a coffee, read the newspaper). Indeed, the role exit-movement-role entry sequence may occur rapidly, with little or no conscious awareness. For instance, a manager may exit one meeting, where she was the boss, and enter another, where she is a peer, with little psychological (and physical) effort.

A factor that affects the magnitude of transition is whether the transition involves movement across shared or exclusive areas of the roles. As Figure 3 illustrates, a set of highly (but not completely) integrated roles consists of three discrete areas: (1) an area exclusive to role 1, (2) an area exclusive to role 2, and (3) an area of overlap between the roles. As the area of over-

FIGURE 3
The Role Transition Process for Integrated Roles^a



^a Compared to segmented roles, integrated roles have lower magnitude of change and higher role blurring. Thus, although integration facilitates boundary crossing, it complicates boundary creation and maintenance.

Transitions: A = transitioning within the overlap—low or no transition, significant blurring; B = transitioning from nonoverlap to nonoverlap—significant transition, low blurring; C = transitioning from nonoverlap to overlap (or vice versa)—moderate transition, moderate blurring.

lap increases, so too does role blurring, whereas the difficulty of transition decreases. Figure 3 depicts three variations of transitions between integrated roles; each differs in the degree to which the role identities overlap. At one extreme (transition A), a role transition within the overlap area may involve no meaningful transition at all; that is, because the relevant portions of the identities overlap entirely, there is no significant psychological or physical shift. At the other extreme (transition B), a transition between two exclusive areas may appear similar to a transition between segmented roles because there is at least some psychological and/or physical shift, despite the partial overlap in role identities. A third option (transition C) occurs when one moves from an exclusive area of one role to the area of overlap with another role (or vice versa). For each of these scenarios, including transition B, the magnitude of transition is lower than for segmented roles.

Blurring between roles. Although the magnitude of the change is far less for integrated roles, the blurring of the roles is far greater (Hill, Miller, Weiner, & Colihan, 1998; Shamir, 1992). As noted, highly flexible and permeable boundaries, coupled with overlapping role identities

and associated role sets and contexts, may foster confusion and anxiety about which role identity is or should be most salient. A prime example is two people who establish what might be termed a *multiplex relationship*—that is, a relationship based on more than one set of roles. Dorsey (1994) describes the challenge experienced by a Xerox salesperson closing a deal with a long-standing customer with whom she had established a friendship. The customer looked to her as a friend and expected a very good deal, whereas she, as a salesperson, was expected to land a highly profitable deal. Thus, role blurring can result in anxiety, and even embarrassment, if one is required to juggle or simultaneously enact the roles (Gross & Stone, 1964).

Further, high flexibility and permeability render roles highly accessible such that either role may be interrupted without warning (Hall, 1990). Interruptions, as role boundary violations, disrupt the enactment of a role identity and may force an unwanted shift to another role identity. Interruptions thus disturb the ongoing identity maintenance process as role identities compete for attention and primacy (Burke, 1991; Hecht, 1996).

Therefore, high integration makes it difficult for one to decouple the roles psychologically, fully disengaging from one in favor of another. Schmid and Jones (1991) found that short-term prison inmates tried to preserve their "true" pre-prison self by playing the part of the tough but cautious inmate. However, because the prison afforded little privacy, and thus space to be "oneself," the inmates were forced to remain in character virtually at all times. As a result, they found it difficult to separate their preprison self from their inmate role identity.

Even sleep, normally associated with one's home role, may be commandeered by another role. A firefighter, required to sleep at the station while on night duty, stated, "Even if you're in a deep sleep, your subconscious is wide awake, listening" (Coyne, 1992: 54).

Proposition 4: The greater the role integration, the greater the potential for confusion regarding which role identity to enact and for undesired interruptions.

By the same token, however, role integration is likely to decrease the affective impact of in-

terruptions. Mandler's (1964, 1990) interruption/discrepancy theory indicates that the degree of discrepancy between role identities determines the level of affect experienced, and the success or failure of accommodation determines whether the affect will be positive or negative. Similarly, according to Burke (1991), "negative connections" between role identities—that is, spacial/time constraints, meaning contradictions, and dual commitments—exacerbate the impact of interruptions.

Consider a child calling his mother during a work meeting, interrupting an otherwise segmented role (Hecht, 1996). To the degree that the mother cannot be in two places at once (spatial/time constraint), cannot merge the meaning of "mother" and "worker" into an overriding identity (meaning contradiction), and is committed to enacting both roles (dual commitment), she will experience interrole conflict and strain. The mother must choose between the parent role (and excuse herself from the meeting) or the work role (and call the child later). Thus, Williams, Suls, Alliger, Learner, and Wan (1991) found that juggling the segmented roles of mother and worker had immediate and negative effects on task enjoyment and mood.⁴

Proposition 5: The greater the role integration, the smaller the affective impact of role boundary violations (interruptions) tends to be.

Given the great potential in highly integrated roles for frequent role confusion and frequent (albeit low-impact) interruptions, the transition challenge of integration lies in creating and maintaining boundaries between the roles.

Creating and Maintaining Role Boundaries

If the transition challenge under high segmentation leads to a processual response—that of crossing role boundaries—then the challenge under high integration leads to a structural re-

⁴ It should be underscored that not all interruptions are experienced negatively (Mandler, 1990). First, an interruption can serve as a respite, providing a welcome break from a taxing role (Westman & Eden, 1997). Second, an interruption may allow one to deal once and for all with a pressing cross-role problem such that one major interruption effectively forestalls a series of minor interruptions and brings peace of mind.

sponse—that of creating and maintaining boundaries. Nippert-Eng defines *boundary work* as “the strategies, principles, and practices that we use to create, maintain and modify cultural categories” (1996b: 7). Boundary work is used to foster either greater segmentation or integration—that is, to construct or modify the temporal, spatial, and other boundaries that demarcate roles—and, in so doing, to create “more or less distinct ‘territories of the self’” (Nippert-Eng, 1996a: 569).

In the United States a number of institutionalized means have emerged that partially segment or buffer otherwise integrated roles. Examples include taboos against discussing religious, political, or other personally charged issues at work; the demarcation of “frontstage” and “backstage” spaces at work (Goffman, 1959); laws that forbid sexual harassment and discrimination based on criteria unrelated to work; norms and company policies that minimize potential conflicts of interests (e.g., friendships with clients); policies that require newly promoted personnel to work in a different department; norms that confine socializing largely to members of one’s own rank; rules of etiquette that govern interactions; policies that forbid soliciting for personal causes while at work; and the use of organizational “time-outs” (Van Maanen & Kunda, 1989), such as office parties, where work role identities are temporarily suspended.

At the individual level, people attain greater segmentation by erecting and defending idiosyncratic boundaries, boundary markers, and means of regulating access. These efforts appear to focus primarily on temporal and spatial boundaries, and there seems to be a limitless variety of boundary work. For example, Ahrentzen (1990) and Mirchandani (1998) have discussed how home-based workers carve out work boundaries by creating a physical workspace, marking the territory with equipment and furniture, restricting the access of others, rescheduling domestic tasks, and setting times when people can call or talk to them. Similarly, live-in domestic workers, such as maids and nannies, often have a difficult time separating their work and nonwork roles. Macdonald (1996) found that, in the absence of the temporal and spatial boundaries implied by off-site living, domestic workers often resort to an assortment of contrived boundaries, such as refusing to perform

emotionally charged tasks (e.g., cooking one’s native cuisine), disparaging and thus distancing themselves from their employers, and routinely spending weekends with friends.

Because idiosyncratic boundaries are less likely to be institutionalized (socially shared), individuals often must work diligently to defend their boundaries against erosion and the incursion of other roles. Home-based workers, for example, sometimes strictly adhere to self-imposed work rules that appear to outsiders to be arbitrary and even silly (e.g., Christensen, 1993).

In sum, segmentation often is deliberately fostered through a host of idiosyncratic and collective temporal, spatial, and other boundaries. However, the integration associated with overlapping role identities and their relevant contexts and role set members, and with relatively flexible and permeable role boundaries, often makes it very hard for the individual to create and maintain role boundaries, yet easier to cross role boundaries.

Proposition 6: The greater the role integration, the more difficult it tends to be to create and maintain role boundaries and the less difficult it tends to be to cross role boundaries.

The Ubiquity of Boundary and Transition Work

Because the cost of segmentation (high role contrast) is the benefit of integration (low contrast), and the benefit of segmentation (low role blurring) is the cost of integration (high blurring), there is an ongoing tension between segmentation and integration that necessitates ongoing boundary and transition work. As noted, extreme cases of segmentation or integration are rare: the vast majority of role sets exist somewhere along the middle of the continuum, where there is a mixture of segmenting and integrating activities. As roles become more segmented, proportionately more effort is focused on the transition work of boundary crossing—that is, on between-role dynamics. Conversely, as roles become more integrated, more effort is focused on the boundary work of boundary creation and maintenance—that is, on within-role dynamics. In short, the relative mix of boundary and transition work is a function of where on the segmentation-integration continuum a particular set of roles lies.

INDIVIDUAL AND CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

Some evidence indicates that individual and contextual factors might play a major part in transition dynamics. Nippert-Eng (1996a,b) found wide variation in the degree to which individuals desired to segment or integrate their work and home domains. Similarly, Richter (1984) found distinct variations in "transition styles" between work and home: for some, the psychological transition preceded the physical one; for others, the two coincided; and for still others, the physical transition preceded the psychological.

We focus on three factors that are likely to affect boundary creation, maintenance, and crossing: (1) role identification, (2) situational strength, and (3) culture.

Role Identification

Following hedonistic or reinforcement principles, individuals are likely to gravitate toward and value roles at which they are adept, that are extrinsically rewarded, and that are experienced as intrinsically satisfying (e.g., Kohn & Schooler, 1983; Mortimer, Lorence, & Kumka, 1986). For example, Adler and Adler (1991) described how college basketball players typically come to view their athletic role as more important than their academic role, because the former encounters far more social affirmation and personal success than the latter.

In turn, the more valued the role and its identity, the more likely they will be internalized as an extension and expression of oneself. *Role identification* is said to occur when a role occupant defines himself or herself at least partly in terms of the role and its identity (e.g., "I am a machinist, a bowler, a parent"; Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Pratt, 1998). The role occupant imports the role and its identity as a (partial) definition of self, essentially becoming the role (Ashforth, 1998).

The greater the role identification, the more one seeks opportunities to express the role identity as a valued portion of the self-concept (Stryker, 1980). Thus, the greater the identification, the more likely one is to attempt to integrate the role with one's other roles. The individual may create more flexible and permeable boundaries around the favored role and reduce the contrast between the role and others. A strongly identified executive might routinely

take work home on weekends and join organizations that will further her career, a strongly identified parent might display family photos in his office and talk about his children, and a strongly identified tennis player might recruit partners at work and talk about her game (e.g., Hochschild, 1997; Nippert-Eng, 1996b). However, given Proposition 4, it is likely that few people prefer complete integration between role domains; thus, there are usually real limits to how much integration is desired.

Role identification also may, paradoxically, both decrease and increase the difficulty of the transition process. With regard to decreasing the difficulty, it seems likely that the stronger the identification, the more eager one will be to enter the role and the more quickly and thoroughly one will become immersed in it. Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) analysis of motivational flow indicates that individuals are far more likely to become psychologically and physically immersed in the experience of a role if there is an initial affinity for what the role entails. In terms of Richter's (1984) transition styles, highly identified individuals are more likely to experience the psychological transition before the physical one. With regard to increasing the difficulty of transition, identification may impede role exit (Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992; Williams & Alliger, 1994). Just as individuals may be eager to enter roles with which they identify, they may be reluctant to exit those same roles. Thus, the physical transition may precede the psychological one.

Proposition 7: The greater one's role identification, the more likely one is to integrate the role with other roles, the less difficult role entry tends to be, and the more difficult role exit tends to be.

Situational Strength

It is important to note that role boundaries and identities and, thus, role transitions are embedded in social domains and local contexts that are rich in history, culture, structure, and so forth (e.g., Morgan, 1997). In particular, we have focused our analysis on roles lodged in organizational settings (work and third places) and at home—in other words, as noted, on roles lodged in social domains that are relatively institution-

alized. As such, these domains may strongly influence the creation, maintenance, and crossing of role boundaries and the nature of role identities within them (Barley, 1989; Kossek, Noe, & DeMarr, 1999).

According to Mischel (1977), a "strong situation" or context exists when everyone construes it in much the same way, everyone has the same understanding of what behaviors are appropriate, everyone is capable of performing those behaviors, and those behaviors are reinforced. In a strong situation, in short, there is consensus on the "right way" and "wrong way" to behave.

For example, a bank's management might require branch employees to be at their respective branches (spatial boundary) from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day (temporal boundary), might discourage personal telephone calls and certain nonwork related activities and topics (inflexible and impermeable boundaries), and might prescribe and train employees to display a certain friendly and service-oriented demeanor (role identity). Thus, the bank context facilitates the creation of boundaries as employees become socialized into the organization and internalize normative expectations. *Maintenance* of those boundaries may be reinforced over time by a variety of rewards and punishments and by recurring enactment of the boundaries (Ashforth & Fried, 1988). Indeed, the more institutionalized the boundaries appear, the more likely they are to become taken for granted (Zucker, 1977). Finally, the bank context shapes when one crosses the role boundaries.

Thus, in shaping the nature and boundaries of role identities, the social domain may strongly influence role transitions so that individual preferences are dwarfed (Kossek et al., 1999).

Proposition 8: The strength of the situation or context will moderate the influence of individual differences on the creation, maintenance, and crossing of role boundaries. Specifically, the stronger the situation or context, the weaker the influence of individual differences will be.

Culture

The culture in which one is embedded likely affects the segmentation or integration of roles and the transition process between them. Cultural backgrounds are an important source of self-

concept and have been shown to influence work behavior (Erez & Earley, 1993) and role dynamics (Ross & Mirowsky, 1990). Perhaps the most influential perspective on culture's impact on organizations is Hofstede's (1984, 1991) approach to cross-cultural values. Based on data from over forty countries, Hofstede found four dimensions along which cultures differ in their preferences for "certain states of affairs over others" (1984: 18): (1) collectivism versus individualism, (2) femininity versus masculinity, (3) uncertainty avoidance, and (4) power distance.⁵ These four dimensions help explain how culture may affect the segmentation or integration of roles.

Collectivist cultures (e.g., Korea) emphasize group needs over individual ones. They foster a definition of self that derives from group memberships and collectivities. This tendency for inclusive or expansive self-definitions suggests that members of collectivist cultures might be more inclined to view their roles as integrated than are members of more individualist cultures (e.g., Great Britain). Markus and Kitayama (1991), for example, have documented how Asian cultures often view the self as interdependent with roles and relationships with others (e.g., parents, coworkers, friends).

A similar logic can be applied to feminine versus masculine cultures, which refers to the degree to which a culture emphasizes gender issues. Feminine cultures (e.g., Denmark) reduce distinctions between stereotypic gender roles and emphasize integration of work and nonwork roles. Conversely, masculine cultures (e.g., Japan) maintain a more rigid distinction between gender roles, creating a segmentalist view of the domains of work and nonwork. For example, van Oudenhoven, Mechelse, and de-Dreu (1998) found that members of feminine cultures approach problem solving and conflict resolution from a more integrative and harmonic perspective.

Uncertainty avoidance refers to a culture's relative emphasis on rules and rituals. This dimension has been shown to affect how leader, manager, and interpersonal relationships are structured (Nasierowski & Mikula, 1998). Low un-

⁵ Hofstede and Bond (1988) added a fifth dimension—Confucian dynamism—which reflects a culture's temporal orientation (future versus static). This dimension was linked to a country's economic performance over time, but it has considerably less explanatory value regarding boundary creation, maintenance, and crossing.

certainly avoidance cultures (e.g., United States) emphasize rules and rituals less than do high uncertainty avoidance cultures (e.g., Israel). Thus, members of such cultures, eschewing formalities, may be more likely to integrate their roles. The relative lack of structure lends itself to an orientation of flexible and permeable role boundaries.

Finally, power distance is the degree to which a culture accepts inequality between people with and without power. Individuals in low power distance cultures (e.g., Finland) are less tolerant than individuals in high power distance cultures (e.g., Poland) of distinctions between those in varying roles, suggesting perhaps a less segmentalist view of roles. Further, Smith et al. (1994) found that managers in high power distance cultures use more formalized procedures and rules than do managers in low power distance cultures, suggesting an affinity for more rigid boundaries.

In sum, each of these cultural values—collectivism, femininity, low uncertainty avoidance, and low power distance—suggest a predisposition toward low contrast in role identities, perhaps coupled with flexible and permeable boundaries. In short, each of these values is associated with the integration end of the segmentation-integration continuum.

Proposition 9: Individuals from/in collectivist, feminine, low uncertainty avoidance, and/or low power distance cultures will tend to integrate roles, whereas individuals from/in individualistic, masculine, high uncertainty avoidance, and/or high power distance cultures will tend to segment roles.

ROLE TRANSITIONS OVER TIME: THE DEVELOPMENT OF SCRIPTS AND SCHEMAS

In our discussion thus far, we have not considered the implications of time. In this section we argue that transition scripts and role schemas tend to emerge over time, easing the difficulty of role transitions and of re-entering roles following interruptions.

Transition Scripts

A script or event schema is a cognitive structure that specifies the typical (descriptive) or appropriate (normative) sequence of behaviors

and events in a given goal-oriented situation or process (Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Gioia & Poole, 1984). For example, the transition from work to a health club might involve saying goodbye to one's coworkers, driving to the club, saying hello to the staff, and changing clothes. Thus, *transition scripts* organize transition tasks in a temporal flow, thereby guiding the individual and providing a sense of predictability and control (Lord & Foti, 1986). Scripts vary from strong to weak, depending on how precisely the sequence of events is specified, and often include multiple paths to destinations (Gioia & Poole, 1984).

Like all scripts, a transition script develops as the individual gains direct and/or vicarious experience with relatively invariant tasks (Poole, Gray, & Gioia, 1990). Tasks become cognitively linked into subroutines (leaving work, driving to the club, entering the club), subroutines become linked into higher-order routines (the work-club transition), and decision rules evolve for handling recurring problems (e.g., if the traffic report indicates traffic jams, leave 30 minutes later). Thus, the greater one's experience, the more elaborate the script and the less difficult the role transition (Sims & Lorenzi, 1992).

Consistent with our discussion of role exit, transition scripts may be cued either externally (e.g., by the alarm clock) or internally (e.g., one feels hungry and so breaks for lunch). Once cued, the enactment of the script might be greatly facilitated by the rites of passage, clear boundary markers, and the actions of others (e.g., family members preparing for their day).

In time, with repeated enactments of a transition script, both the cuing and the enactment of the transition process are likely to become relatively automatic or "mindless" (Ashforth & Fried, 1988; Langer, 1989)—that is, performed with little conscious effort or awareness. The specific tasks become cognitively chunked together so that the specifics are effectively forgotten relative to the more abstract, overarching subroutines. Thus, the individual may slip easily from one role identity into another. Of course, an otherwise mindless transition might contain unstructured and therefore effortful subroutines, such as the flow of conversation during a daily car pool to work.

The development of mindlessness conserves cognitive capacity, freeing one to attend to other matters (Shiffrin & Schneider, 1977). It is possible, then, that individuals might have some of their more creative thoughts while engaged in

time-consuming but relatively mindless role transitions, such as a long commute to work (Nippert-Eng, 1996b). This might be called the "Eureka principle."⁶ However, mindlessness may prove dysfunctional if inappropriate transitions are unintentionally cued, as when a role-specific person, object, or phrase are encountered in the wrong setting or at the wrong time. For example, a person might be relaxing at the movies when a particular actor reminds him of a colleague. Suddenly, thoughts about work may emerge unbidden.

In sum, the concept of transition scripts suggests the following proposition.

Proposition 10: The more a role transition is repeated, the more automatic and less difficult the transition tends to become and the more likely it is that role-specific indicators will trigger a psychological transition automatically, even when the transition is inappropriate.

Role Schemas

A *role schema* is a cognitive structure that organizes one's knowledge about the typical or appropriate behaviors expected of a person occupying a given position (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). For example, a teacher is expected to discuss curriculum content with students, to administer and grade tests, and to meet with students' parents. As one gains experience in performing a role, one's role schema becomes more extensive (breadth), more detailed (depth), and more organized (Lord & Foti, 1986; Sims & Lorenzi, 1992).

As with a transition script, the cuing and enactment of a role schema tends to become more automatic over time so that one may enter a role and execute at least portions of it quite reflexively (Ashforth & Fried, 1988; Weiss & Ilgen, 1985). For example, the teacher might launch into a lecture about a familiar topic without consulting his notes. Consequently, the jarring effect of interruptions may be attenuated over time by the development of a role schema. The teacher, interrupted by an emergency telephone call from home, might resume his lecture with

little difficulty or loss of continuity. Indeed, individuals may become quite facile at juggling roles and may develop transition scripts for re-entering roles that are interrupted (Mandler, 1990; Tingey, Kiger, & Riley, 1996).

Proposition 11: The more a role is enacted, the smaller the affective impact of role boundary violations (interruptions) tends to be.

DISCUSSION

We have focused our analysis on the psychological dynamics of daily role transitions involving the social domains of work, home, and third places. A role cues a certain persona or role identity, with specific goals, values, beliefs, norms, interaction styles, and time horizons. Further, a role that is typically associated with a specific social domain tends to be circumscribed in space and time, creating role boundaries.

Combining these concepts of role identity and role boundary, we argued that roles can be arrayed on a continuum, ranging from high segmentation (i.e., high contrast in role identities and inflexible and impermeable role boundaries) to high integration (i.e., low contrast in role identities and flexible and permeable boundaries). High segmentation decreases the blurring of roles but increases the magnitude of change between roles, fostering the transition challenge of crossing role boundaries. Exit from one role and entry into another are often facilitated by personal and collective rites of passage that signal to the individual and members of his or her role set(s) the change in roles and attendant identities. Conversely, high integration decreases the magnitude of change but increases role blurring, fostering the challenge of creating and maintaining role boundaries. This challenge is typically addressed by personal and collective boundary work that serves to buffer otherwise integrated roles.

Future Research

Research is needed to assess our major arguments and specify more precisely the processes underlying micro role transitions. Issues that warrant particular attention include the following: What role attributes are most central to the sense that two roles are segmented or inte-

⁶ Legend has it that, while taking a bath, Archimedes exclaimed, "Eureka! I've got it!" when he had a sudden flash of insight into a chemistry problem.

grated (e.g., identity, physical locale, people)? To what extent do people generally prefer and seek segmentation? To what extent do rites of passage, forms of boundary work, and transition scripts differ across individuals and role domains? We have argued that role contrast is associated with inflexible and impermeable boundaries. How prevalent are hybrid cases (i.e., high contrast and high flexibility/permeability; low contrast and low flexibility/permeability), and how do they affect role transitions? How do individuals minimize interruptions and cope with them when they occur? How do transition dynamics affect critical outcomes related to work, home, and third places, including satisfaction, performance, commitment, strain, cohesion, and love and respect?

Our arguments also can be extended in at least two promising directions.

Comparing role domains. We have argued that transitions in the at-work domain tend to be less difficult because of the common organizational context. In what other ways might the transition process vary across the work-home, at-work, and work-third place domains? For example, Pleck argues that work and home roles may have "asymmetrically permeable boundaries" (1977: 423), as when organizations expect employees to work uninterrupted for certain blocks of time and to juggle their home role to accommodate work demands. This would suggest a greater need to create and maintain boundaries at home to defend against work encroachments than vice versa, particularly with the growing popularity of pagers, cell phones, e-mail, and other technological developments.

Similarly, we have noted that role identities may be loosely coupled (segmentation) or tightly coupled (integration). This begs the issue of why, when, and how individuals select roles that are highly segmented, rather than highly integrated. Do individuals tend to seek a certain level of diversity, complementarity, and complexity across their "role system" (cf. Thoits & Virshup, 1997)? Are work-third place roles more likely to be segmented than work-home or home-third place roles? Further, there are many types of third places. It seems likely that individuals would be more comfortable with greater integration between work and some third places (e.g., lunch-time restaurant) than others (e.g., gay bar).

Other role transitions. In future research scholars might examine the applicability of the transi-

tion processes in Figures 2 and 3 to macro transitions, such as organizational entry, promotions, and transfers; to quasi-micro transitions, such as vacations, short-term assignments, and infrequent or one-time roles (e.g., defendant, amusement park patron); to recurring "ephemeral roles" (Zurcher, 1970), such as bank customer and movie goer; and to "role extensions" (Johnston & Johnson, 1988), such as when a subordinate must manage the department in his supervisor's absence. For example, a training rotation to a different job and department would be analogous to a transition between somewhat segmented roles, suggesting the potential for difficulty in crossing the boundaries between jobs. And a role extension from subordinate to temporary supervisor would be analogous to a transition between somewhat integrated roles (i.e., same department and role set), suggesting the potential for difficulty in creating and maintaining role boundaries (e.g., resisting peers who expect favors).

It should be noted that our model for segmented roles (Figure 2) is more readily applicable to macro transitions than is the model for integrated roles (Figure 3). Segmented roles share with macro transitions the attribute of more or less complete separation of one role from another—that is, fully exiting one role and entering the next.

Practical Implications

Since the industrial revolution, home and work typically have been segmented (Andrews & Bailyn, 1993; Shamir, 1992). Segmentation has given rise to what Kanter (1977) calls the "myth of separate worlds"—namely, that the two social domains do not and should not overlap. As Andrews and Bailyn (1993) have noted, this myth marginalized and privatized work-related family problems, enabling organizations to act almost as though families (and third places) did not exist and forcing organizational members to seek idiosyncratic solutions to their problems.

In recent years the pendulum has begun to swing back so that many organizations have developed policies allowing flex time, on-site day care, recreational facilities, telecommuting, and so on. In short, many organizations are fostering greater integration between home and work in the sense defined earlier (e.g., flexible and permeable role boundaries, overlapping locales). Our analysis, however, suggests that

there is an inherent challenge to transitions between integrated roles (i.e., creating and maintaining role boundaries), just as there is between segmented roles (i.e., crossing role boundaries). For example, on-site day care might cause working parents to feel that they should visit their children periodically during the workday, thereby interrupting the flow of their work role (Hall & Richter, 1988). Thus, high integration may compromise the integrity of home, work, and third places.

Given our argument that individuals vary in their preference for segmentation-integration but that few desire complete integration, we caution organizations not to blindly or forcefully blur the work, home, and third place domains. To be sure, some organizations have succeeded by exploiting the intersection of these domains (e.g., direct service organizations, such as Amway and Mary Kay, that commercialize social ties and "socialize" commercial ones; Pratt, 1994), but they tend to draw from relatively unique applicant pools. There is likely an optimal fit between an individual and his or her workplace regarding the balance between segmentation and integration, and organizations benefit with increased member commitment when they provide a workplace that accommodates members' preferences. Greater role segmentation, if indeed desired by organizational members, can be maintained through myriad small cultural adjustments that legitimate home and third place boundaries, such as curtailing meetings early and late in the workday, travel on weekends and holidays, and telephone calls at home (Bailyn, 1997; Hall & Richter, 1988).

In short, we endorse Kirchmeyer's (1995) call for organizational practices that symbolize respect for the employee's life outside of work—that is, practices that acknowledge and value the mutual needs of employer and employee and allow the employee a reasonable degree of autonomy in negotiating role segmentation-integration and the cuing and enactment of the transition process. Indeed, based on a sample of Canadian managers, Kirchmeyer (1995: 526) found that practices symbolizing respect (e.g., flexible work schedules, alternative work arrangements) were positively associated with organizational commitment, whereas practices symbolizing integration (e.g., recreational facilities, personal counseling and assistance programs) were not associated with commitment, and practices symbolizing segmen-

tation (e.g., "prefers employees to keep work and nonwork as separate worlds"; Kirchmeyer, 1995: 526) were negatively associated with commitment.

In closing, if everyday life is indeed increasingly mediated through numerous, formal roles in organizational settings, it is important that we gain a firmer grasp of the dynamics that govern the frequent and recurring transitions between these roles.

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