CHAPTER 16

ROLE THEORY IN ORGANIZATIONS: A RELATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

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The roles that a person plays in life are ubiquitous. Roles such as spouse, parent, charity volunteer, engineering professional, and manager fulfill important functions in a person's family, community, and workplace. These roles also provide people with a sense of who they are and who they are becoming. Within organizations, many people become, at one time or another, an employee, a subordinate, a manager, a department member, a customer, a supplier, a project team member, and the like. These roles are enacted or played either separately (e.g., giving a performance evaluation as a manager in the morning and receiving a performance evaluation as a subordinate in the afternoon) or simultaneously (e.g., being a member of a product development team representing one's department, of which one is manager). It seems as though individuals, as well as organizations, cannot function without roles—wherein structured interdependencies organize and create a network of intertwining tasks and responsibilities[1] (Ashforth, 2001; Biddle, 1986; Katz & Kahn, 1978; Stryker & Burke, 2000). Roles, as such, become the nexus for how work is designed, communicated, accomplished, evaluated, and experienced (e.g., Welbourne, Johnson, & Erez, 1998).

However, this same ubiquity of organizationally bound roles makes it significantly more difficult to understand the influence of roles on individual-level attitude and behavior. For example, organizational research focusing on roles has spanned such wide-ranging topics as socialization, job transfers, social networks, team functioning, work/family conflict, and work design. One can easily access over 10,000 relevant articles, monographs, books, book chapters, and dissertations by entering *role theory* (and role-centered terms) as key words across databases within psychology and sociology. As such, any review of roles in organizations tends to be a daunting task. Indeed, the sprawling and disparate use of the role concept led Biddle (1986) to worry about its use as more metaphorical than theoretical and/or practical. Fortunately, the study of roles within the organizational context remains vibrant and viable.

To understand organizational roles and how roles influence attitudes and behaviors, one needs to understand its rooting in and influence on the self-concept. As a result, our review of roles within organizations takes an identity perspective. The concept of identity within organizational research has traditionally focused on how a collective (e.g., organization, team, occupation) or social category (e.g., gender, nationality) influences one's self-concept and, in turn, behavior (e.g., Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Haslam, 2004; Haslam & Ellemers, 2005). Nevertheless, organizational roles and their subsequent relationships also have a central influence on one's identity at work (e.g., Ashforth, 2001; Kreiner, Hollensbe, & Sheep, 2006; Sluss & Ashforth, 2007). Both social identity theory (SIT) and role identity theory, via microsociology and social psychology, have focused

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[1] Note that (although slight) we distinguish between role and job. Roles include both the tasks and the interdependencies (both relational and structural) subsequent to the tasks. Jobs focus squarely on the tasks. It seems one may hold multiple roles and multiple jobs (as defined here). However, the difference lies in the foci (see Role Definition section).

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consistently on how social structure (i.e., society) influences the self-concept, which, in turn, influences one's affect, behavior, and cognition (Ashforth, 2001; Biddle, 1986; Mead, 1934; Stryker & Burke, 2000; cf. Katz & Kahn, 1978). As such, identity-based role theory (broadly defined) is multilevel and cross-disciplinary in nature because it "combines . . . [the] psychological (individual contributions) and . . . sociological (organizational framework) perspective[s]" (Welbourne et al., 1998, p. 542; cf. Whetten, 2007). In sum, (a) work is experienced and lived via one's roles; (b) the subsequent role identities have significant influence on individual affect, behavior, and cognition; and (c) to understand behavior within organizations, we must therefore understand the dynamics and processes of role identity.

In this chapter, we review the identity-based role literature. First, we provide a theoretical overview of both role identity and social identity theories—integrating the personalized and relational level of self with that of the depersonalized and collective (cf. Brewer & Gardner, 1996). Second, we turn our attention to three areas of interest[2]: (a) multiple roles; (b) role crafting[3] (i.e., role making/taking, role definition, role innovation, role clarity), as well as a proposed new direction; and (c) role recovery. We delineate promising directions for future research within each of these three major areas.

ROLE IDENTITY AND SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORIES

A *role* is traditionally defined as a set of behavioral expectations attached to a position in an organized set of social relationships (Merton, 1957; Stryker, 2007; Stryker & Burke, 2000). In short, these behavioral expectations specify the meaning and character of the role—that is, the role identity. As such, the role is attached to a structural position, whereas the role identity is how the individual (i.e., role occupant) interprets and makes sense of that role (cf. Ashforth, 2001). A role identity, therefore, is a cognitive schema that organizes and stores the information and meaning attached to the role (via behavioral expectations) and serves as a framework for interpreting in-role as well as extra-role behavior (Stets & Burke, 2000; Tepper, Lockhart, & Hoobler, 2001). These behavioral expectations are subject to social construction and negotiation among role occupants (Mead, 1934; Swann, 1987). Although a structurally positioned role assumes stability in behavioral expectations determined by institutional pressures, microprocesses that create these behavioral expectations exist and, as a result, are more dynamic (e.g., Reay, Golden-Biddle, & Germann, 2006). For example, the role of manager may possess more or less institutionalized behavioral expectations such as allocating resources, providing rewards, and giving performance feedback, but the nuances, content, and focus of these behaviors are still negotiated by those occupying the role (e.g., manager) as well as the counterrole (e.g., subordinate, senior manager, peer manager).

As such, role identity theory attempts to integrate both the structural functionalist (Burt, 1982; Merton, 1957; Parsons, 1951) and symbolic interactionist perspectives (Mead, 1934; Serpe, 1987; Stryker & Burke, 2000). Structural functionalism focuses on how the social structure (e.g., the role position such as manager, director, or technician) institutionalizes stable behavioral expectations across situations and, depending upon function, hierarchy, and status, how that position influences the self-concept. Along the same lines, symbolic interactionism focuses on how individuals interrelate across the network of role relationships, creating both meaning for the role occupant (that is, identity) and providing a working template or cognitive schema to interpret in-role and extra-role experience. As such, role identity theory has progressed from simply explaining the shared, institutionalized, and normative expectations given a position in some social structure such as an organi-

[2] We integrate findings from both work design research as well as team dynamics, but only as these findings directly relate to role identity theory. However, we do not comprehensively cover these areas as they are covered in other chapters in this volume (see chaps. 13 and 19, this volume).

[3] Although *role transitions* is a widely researched topic within organizational psychology, the role transition literature is mainly under the purview of organizational socialization—newcomers adjusting to and integrating with their new role, job, occupation, and/or organization. We direct the reader's attention to the chapter in this volume as well as recent reviews (Ashforth, 2001; Ashforth, Sluss, & Harrison, 2007; see also Vol. 3, chap. 2, this handbook).

zation or community of practice to exploring the processes by which role occupants define themselves and their roles vis-à-vis social interaction with other role occupants (e.g., Reay et al., 2006; Stryker, 2007; cf. Biddle, 1986). As a result, organizational scholars broaden the definition of a role (and its identity) to include not only the structural position but also the goals, values, beliefs, norms, interaction styles, and time horizons that are associated with the particular role (Ashforth, 2001).

We assert that roles and their subsequent identities are more dynamic within the organizational context than within other social structures. Traditionally, role identity theory (within microsociology) leans on the supposition that "society" begets role expectations and that society is seen as a "mosaic of relatively *durable* [italics added] patterned interactions and relationships, embedded in an array of groups" (Stryker & Burke, 2000, p. 285). In contrast, role theory within organizations places society at the organizational level wherein there are myriad potential role identities and subsequent role relationships. Organizational roles are natural outcomes due to a nexus of transactions and contracts (Katz & Kahn, 1978; cf. Williamson, 1985). Roles are born from the negotiation and interactive processes that are inherent in working out the trade of goods, services, information, or whatever is of value to that particular role relationship. These roles are also, as a result, subject to changes inherent in organizational contexts—thus, the organization (as a proxy for society) is less durable than the above definition presupposes. For example, new mergers, alliances, products, or services are all fodder for change in organizational roles and responsibilities (e.g., Chreim, Williams, & Hinings, 2007; Reay et al., 2006). Therefore, role identities within organizations, although influenced by institutionalized pressures for conformity and legitimacy, are under pressure by dynamic situational (both structural and relational) factors resulting in equivalent volatility in role expectations, identity, and behavior. Given the rate of change and multiplicity of roles within organizations, the question remains how individuals organize and manage a seeming mass of role identities. The answer lies (at least partly) in role identity salience.

Role Identity Salience

People live out their organizational lives within an ever-expanding, changing, and intertwining network of role relationships. Role identity theory deals directly with how and why individuals make certain role-bound choices in their behavior (Stryker, 2007). In short, role identity theory seeks to answer this "quintessential question: Given situations in which there exist behavioral options aligned with two (or more) sets of role expectations attached to two (or more) positions in networks of social relationships, why do persons choose one particular course of action?" (Stryker & Burke, 2000, p. 286). In other words, role identity theory directly addresses the fact that, within the organizational context, individuals have numerous group memberships and role relationships to enact that, at times, may conflict and cause trade-offs in both attitude and behavior.

Each role identity is placed on a salience hierarchy wherein higher salience increases the "readiness to act out [that] identity" (Stryker & Serpe, 1994, p. 17). Salience is determined by two main factors: (a) the number of role relationships tied to the role and (b) the strength or intensity of the relational ties within these role relationships (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995; Stets & Burke, 2000; Stryker & Burke, 2000; Stryker & Serpe, 1982, 1994). As a result, the higher the number of connected role relationships and the stronger these relational ties, the higher the role identity salience, which, in turn, influences role-choice behavior (i.e., acting in accordance to one role vs. another).

In order to explain (and predict) role-choice behavior, we propose an integrative model in which relational and situational factors facilitate role identity salience. However, role identity salience only activates the identity and does not guarantee role-choice behavior. We suggest that role identification moderates the relationship between identity salience and role-choice behavior such that role identification will facilitate the association between perceiving the role identity as salient and acting in accordance to that role versus some other salient role (i.e., role-choice behavior; see Figure 16.1).

Although recognizing the influence of these factors on the link between salience and activation, role identity theorists also give room that one's identity

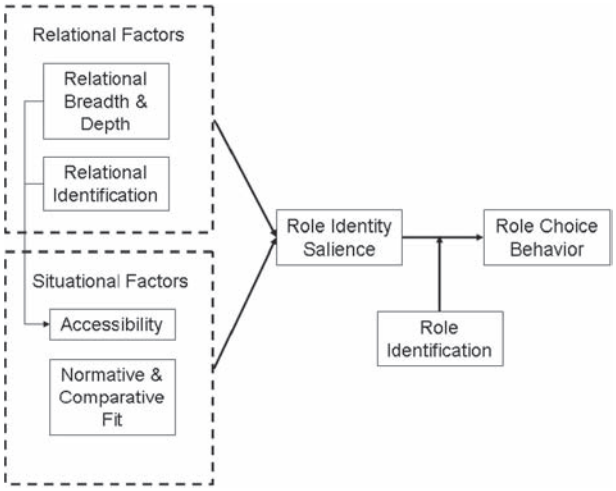

FIGURE 16.1. Role identity salience process.

salience hierarchy may become a type of "personality variable carried . . . across situations" (Stryker & Serpe, 1994, p. 18)—in effect, allowing one to create situations in which a particular role may be enacted. For example, 1st-year college students decorated their new dorm rooms in a similar fashion to their room at home, thus reaffirming their identity during this transition (Serpe & Stryker, 1987). As such, identities highest on the salience hierarchy tend to be enacted independent of situational and relational cues—due to chronic accessibility (cf. Ashforth & Johnson, 2001)—whereas the remainder varies on the basis of the myriad cues that increase and/or decrease role identity salience (see Figure 16.1).

Relational determinants of role identity salience. Role identity theory proposes two major relational factors that influence role identity salience: the number of role relationships (i.e., relational breadth and depth) and the relational tie strength (i.e., relational identification) connected to the particular role. Sluss and Ashforth (2007), building on role identity theory and the personal relationship literature, further delineated these two relational determinants of identity salience.

Relational breadth and depth. Thus far, we have discussed role identities as a generalized network of roles and counterroles (e.g., how Jim sees himself as a colleague to other civil engineers, how Jim sees himself as a team leader to team members). Just as one organizational member may have multiple roles (e.g., manager, engineer, subordinate, project team member), the same organizational member will have multiple role relationships attached to each of these roles (Fletcher, Simpson, Thomas, & Giles, 1999; Sluss & Ashforth, 2007)—again, at a generalized level. For example, the role of manager inherently includes role relationships with subordinates, upper management, peer managers, customers, and other organizational stakeholders. As such, role identities are inherently relational in nature (e.g., Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Brickson, 2000; Sluss & Ashforth, 2007). A role is not lived or maintained "solo" but relies on the relational incumbents to give it meaning and substance. For example, the subordinate is only a subordinate when there is a manager; a client is only a client when there is a consultant; and a student is only a student when there is a teacher, other students, or other pertinent relational incumbents. Therefore, role identities may span from generalized understandings of a role (e.g., being an accountant) to particularized (and negotiated) role relationships with specific others (e.g., Sophia the accountant's relationship with Audrey the external auditor vs. Sophia's relationship with Jim the coworker; Sluss & Ashforth, 2007). Similarly, there are multiple midrange role identities as well. For example, Sophia the accountant may have a different understanding of role expectations (i.e., role identity) when interacting with external auditors as a whole than when interacting with a particular external auditor, Audrey. Therefore, identity salience may be extended from a simple frequency count of relationships to role relationship "depth" (i.e., number of abstraction levels from generalized to particularized) as well as "breadth" (i.e., number of relational others at each level of abstraction; see Figure 16.2).

We argue that the more the depth and breadth of role relationships attached to a role, the higher the role identity salience—that is, the more the individual will be ready to enact that particular role identity. For example, Jim's role identity as the plant production manager may be much more salient for his work identity than his role identity as a part-time

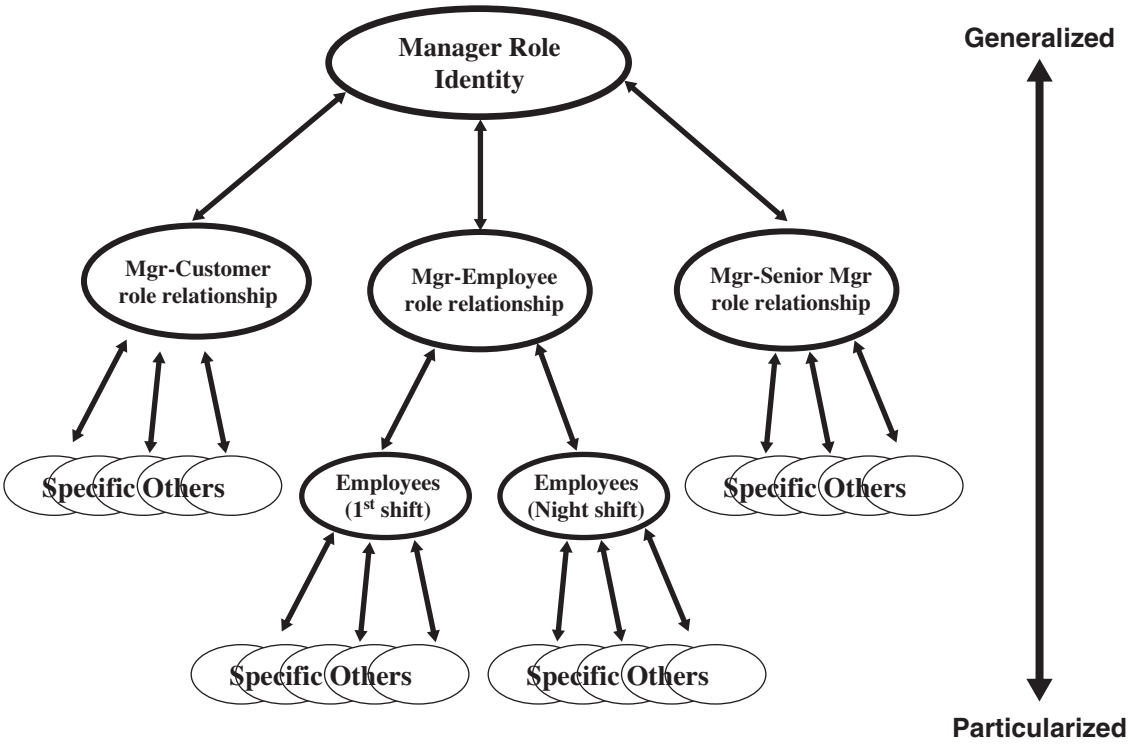

FIGURE 16.2. Role identity hierarchy: relational depth and breadth. Mgr = manager.

member of a corporate-wide quality improvement team. Indeed, Jim may enact his manager identity across these two situations because of overwhelming relational depth and breadth attached to the managerial role. Nevertheless, it is possible that Jim's managerial role (again, with an overwhelming relational depth and breadth) will subsume to his quality-improvement team role because of the strength of the particularized relationships existing on the team (e.g., Jane, the vice president of production and quality-improvement team member has been Jim's career-long mentor)—the topic of our next discussion.

Relational identification. Relational tie strength (i.e., relational identification) is the second driver of role identity salience. As above, a relational view of identity provides an expanded definition of relational tie strength via relational identification. Sluss and Ashforth (2007) defined *relational identification* as the "partial definition of oneself in terms of a given role-relationship" (p. 15). In other words, the self expands to include the role relationship (and, in part, the relational other) as central to the role incumbent's identity (e.g., Aron & Aron, 2000). Just as role identity may be generalized or particularized, relational identification can also function at the generalized and particularized level. For example, Dinah, a software engineer, may have a generalized sense of relational identification with project managers as well as a particularized relational identification with David, one particular project manager. Additionally, relational identification may take on both a positive or negative valence, resulting in three types of identification: (a) relational identification (positively viewed relationship); (b) relational disidentification (negatively viewed relationship); and (c) ambivalent relational identification (mixed perceptions concerning the role relationship; Sluss & Ashforth, 2007; cf. Elsbach, 1999). As a result, a role identity may become salient because of a strong relational identification with either a particularized role relationship or a more generalized role relationship. For example, Jane's role identity as a salesperson to her favorite and most fruitful client may outweigh her role identity as a sales team leader with a large number of salespeople.

In sum, relational identity and identification further delineate role theory's view of salience by proposing two relational factors: (a) the depth and breadth of relational ties and (b) the strength of the generalized and particularized relational identifications attached to the particular role.

Situational determinants of role identity salience. In addition to relational determinants of identity salience, SIT provides insight into situational determinants of identity salience as well as specifies role identification (Hogg et al., 1995). From the perspective of SIT, roles may be viewed as social categories or collectives in which one may be a member (Ashforth, 2001; Pratt, Rockmann, & Kaufmann, 2006). Similar to other social categories or collectives (e.g., organization, occupation, and nationality), a person can define him- or herself in terms of a role resulting in role identification.

Situational factors. Both SIT (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986) and self-categorization theory (SCT; J. C. Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Whetherell, 1987) provide additional insight into the role identity salience hierarchy. SIT and SCT provide complementary drivers to identity salience (J. C. Turner et al., 1987). Social identity scholars also recognize that individuals are members of a large variety of collectives and, as a result, are simultaneously incumbents in a plethora of roles (e.g., colleague, supervisor, subordinate). Thus, similar to role identity theory, identity salience becomes an important component in explaining identity-relevant attitudes and behaviors. Within SIT and SCT, salience is considered as a continuous variable formed by an interaction of accessibility and fit within a given situation (J. C. Turner, 1999). A category is more likely to be salient if the individual is predisposed to perceive that category as relevant (accessibility) and if both the category and the situation match the individual's expectations and reality matches these expectations (see Oakes, Turner, & Haslam, 1991).

Accessibility. *Accessibility* describes the perceiver's readiness to accept a category (i.e., the extent to which it has prior meaning and significance for the individual). The higher this prior meaning of a category, the less input that is necessary to activate this specific category (Oakes, 1987). Accessibility in SCT has some links with salience in identity theory, in as much as identity theorists also propose a higher probability of a role being activated when the person's commitment to the role is chronically higher, because of the relational depth and breadth of the role as well as the strength of relational identification (see previous discussion). Nevertheless, according to Hogg et al. (1995), role identity theory tends to view salience as more stable than dynamic, whereas SCT conceptualizes identity salience as flexible and situationally determined. We tend to agree with SCT. Indeed, our relational view of role identity salience (i.e., relational depth and breadth; relational identification, accessibility) allows for change in both number and strength of role-based relational ties, as does the concept of fit.

Normative and comparative fit. In addition to accessibility, SCT specifies additional situational determinants—normative and comparative fit. *Fit* refers to the match between an activated category (e.g., a manager's role) and the stimulus reality (e.g., the context of a weekly meeting between the manager and his or her subordinates; J. C. Turner, 1999). Oakes (1987) differentiated between comparative and normative fit. *Normative fit* describes a principle "which suggests that a given category is more likely to become salient to the extent that the pattern of observed content-related similarities and differences between category members is consistent with the perceiver's prior expectations" (Haslam, 2001, p. 382). In addition, *comparative fit* describes a principle "which suggests that a given category is more likely to become salient to the extent that the differences between members of that category are perceived to be smaller than the differences between members of that category and comparison others" (Haslam, 2001, p. 381).

In practice, identity salience increases (a) when the category is simply mentioned, for instance, when a manager mentions another (potentially competing) team in a team meeting (in experimental studies, presenting the colors of the university the student participants belonged to was sufficient to increase performance; e.g., James & Greenberg,

1989); (b) when an individual encounters other people within the context of relevant other categories such as a manager meeting a subordinate during an appraisal, or when the context suggests that a specific role identity will be expected (van Dick, Wagner, Stellmacher, & Christ, 2005); and (c) when role incumbents perceive that they are in conflict or have incompatible goals (e.g., managers meeting with union representatives; see Wagner & Ward, 1993).

Role identification. SIT and SCT were initially developed to understand intergroup hostility, ingroup favoritism, and outgroup discrimination or bias. SIT and SCT were then later applied to organizational contexts (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Hogg & Terry, 2000). As a result, the social identity perspective has proved a fruitful framework to explore and understand a great range of organizationally relevant issues, such as leadership, productivity, communication and decision making, diversity, and stress (for reviews, see Haslam, 2004; Haslam, Postmes, & Ellemers, 2003; van Dick, 2004). It has been shown, for instance, that strong organizational identification relates to lower turnover and turnover intentions (van Dick, Wagner, Stellmacher, & Christ, 2004), higher willingness to show extra-role behavior (van Dick, Grojean, Christ, & Wieseke, 2006), stronger customer orientation (Wieseke, Ullrich, Christ, & van Dick, 2007), and more creative effort (Hirst, van Dick, & van Knippenberg, in press). Meta-analyses have also revealed reliable relationships between team and organizational identifications and a range of attitudes and behaviors relevant in organizations, such as job satisfaction, team climate, and in-role and extra-role behavior (Riketta, 2005; Riketta & van Dick, 2005). The relationships between these identifications and important attitudes and behaviors are quite substantial; Riketta (2005), for instance, reported relationships between organizational identification and job satisfaction ($r = .54$), job involvement ($r = .61$), turnover intentions ($r = -.48$), in-role performance ($r = .17$), and extra-role performance ($r = .35$).

Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, and Flament (1971) used the minimal group paradigm to investigate the conditions under which individuals treat their in-group members better than members of other (out)-groups. In a series of experiments, Tajfel and colleagues showed that, even in completely artificial groups, participants consistently allocated more points to in-group members than to out-group members even at the cost of optimum reward. Considering these findings, Tajfel (1978) started distinguishing between personal and social identities. The personal and the collective identity might be seen as some extreme poles of an identity (i.e., self-defining) continuum with role identities (that is, the relational level) as discussed in role identity theory forming anything between those poles.

Outside the laboratory and in organization-based field studies, identity-based intergroup relationships have also been investigated. Richter, West, van Dick, and Dawson (2006), for instance, showed that strong team identities relate to more conflicts with members of other teams but only for those employees who are not simultaneously identified with the larger organization. As another example, Terry and Callan (1998) demonstrated intergroup bias driven by identity-based status differential in the context of an organizational merger.

Brewer and Gardner (1996) argued that the social self can be further differentiated as relational and collective. The *relational* level of self is derived from interpersonal relationships with the welfare of the dyad as the focus of motivation. The *collective* level of self (à la SIT) is derived from impersonal group memberships with the welfare of the group as the focus of motivation.

Tajfel (1978) defined *social identity* as "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (p. 63). It should be noted that identification is somewhat distinct from simple self-categorization as a group or role-set member—wherein the latter is recognition of membership in a collective (Hogg & Terry, 2000). However,

> the recognition of one's group membership can produce a psychological connection between the self and the group . . .

> there is a considerable amount of variability in the degree to which people feel a subjective sense of interconnectedness with their groups; that is, in the degree to which they include the ingroup in the self." (Tropp & Wright, 2001, p. 586)

In sum, identification is more than just categorizing oneself as a role occupant.

Following this, at least three components of identification can be differentiated: (a) an affective component (How much do I value the identity?), (b) an evaluative component (How much do I think others value this identity?), as well as (c) a cognitive component (self-categorization; Do I see myself as a member of the social category?; see van Dick, 2001). In its basic form, SIT predicts that (a) people strive for a positive self-concept and that (b) one's identity partly consists of one's memberships in social groups—the roles one holds in organizations in particular (see Hogg & Terry, 2000). Holding the role of a manager, employee, or member of a specific team (e.g., marketer or production worker) partly answers the individual's question of "Who am I?" and thus contributes to his or her self-definition. SIT thus would predict that organizational members' identification with their roles will be associated with role-related attitudes and behavior. Indeed, Pratt (1998) elaborated on the point that identification serves the individual's needs for belonging and safety. Following this, an individual who identifies more strongly with a role will have more of his or her needs satisfied via the role and is more likely to enact the role expectations and role-choice behavior. As our model alludes, we argue that, whereas relational (i.e., relational depth/breadth, relational identification) and structural factors (i.e., accessibility and fit) drive role identity salience, role identification strengthens the relationship between role identity salience (wherein the identity is activated) and role-choice behavior (see Figure 16.1; cf. van Dick, Wagner, et al., 2004).

So far, we have provided an in-depth account of the theoretical bases of roles in organizations. We have integrated role identity, relational identity, and SITs to specify the nature, forms, underlying motives and situational dependencies of role identities. We have provided an overall framework for how both relational (i.e., relational breadth and depth, relational identification) and situational (i.e., accessibility, fit) factors influence role identity salience and, in the end, role-choice behavior. We now apply our framework to specific areas of current research—namely, multiple roles, role making/taking, role definition, role innovation, and role clarity—as well as propose a new direction: role recovery.

MULTIPLE ROLES

As we have indicated throughout this chapter, an employee is not only an organizational member but also someone who is involved in multiple groups and role relationships within and between organizational boundaries. As a result, an individual may have a veritable jungle of role identities that potentially influence attitudes and behaviors. In our discussion of role identity salience, we have already suggested how one role identity may become activated and influence role-choice behavior over another. Here, we focus on research that examines simultaneous or interacting identities. We show that the individual has multiple coexisting identities and that the level of salience determines which of those identities becomes relevant for one's behavior provided that there is an identity–behavior match.

Current Research

Self-theories are the multiple hypotheses a person has about one's self to guide perceptions, thoughts, and actions. The concept of the self refers to the insider's view of personality (Markus & Cross, 1990). As a fundamentally social construal (Banaji & Prentice 1994), the "working self-concept is influential in the shaping and controlling of intrapersonal behavior (self-relevant information processing, affect regulation, and motivational processes) and interpersonal processes, which include social perception, social comparison, and social interaction" (Markus & Cross, 1990, p. 578). For example, a person's theory of what makes a good leader guides that person's responses to and interactions with his or her subordinates and even his or her own leaders (see Dweck, 1991).

Certainly, current thinking holds that a person may possess many possible selves (or role identities; Ibarra, 1999; Leonard, Beauvais, & Scholl, 1999; Lord, Brown, & Freidberg, 1999; Markus & Nurius, 1986). Although consensus has yet to be reached within the literature, scholars agree on three points—namely, that the self-concept (a) contains a stable aspect; (b) may change in differing situations; and (c) is closely linked to traits, values, and behavior (e.g. Donahue, 1994; Higgins, Klein, & Strauman, 1987; Roberts & Donahue, 1994). The multiple and differing possible self-concepts that individuals possess may be considered as separate role identities. These identities carry information about what are considered proper behaviors in a particular situation, what values are salient in that situation, and what attitudes are relevant for a particular situation (Leonard et al., 1999). Indeed, although the stable aspect of (global) identity provides a starting point for role identities, it is the specific role identities that provide the relevant information that influence behavior within that role (e.g. traits, competencies, values).

We obviously do not have room here for discussing the many role identities conceivable in organizational contexts. These possibilities include organizational members who also have a strong professional or occupational role identity, or a manager who, in addition to his role identity, may still be a team member (as a primus inter pares) with a strong associated identity to that role. Johnson, Morgeson, Ilgen, Meyer, and Lloyd (2006), for instance, explored veterinarians' identities concerning their profession, their organization, and their work group and found that patterns of those identities varied according to the veterinarians' status (e.g., as working in a veterinary medicine vs. nonveterinary medicine organization, or being an associate vs. an owner of the organization). Pratt and Forman (2000) suggested that those and other multiple identities in organizations can be managed by changing the number of and/or relationships among the identities through managerial responses of compartmentalization, deletion, integration, or aggregation.

To illustrate just one of the many pairs or combinations of multiple role identities, we discuss two of the probably most prominent identities—that is, the role of member of the organization as a whole and the role of member in smaller organizational subunits (e.g., team, department, workgroup). Ashforth and Johnson (2001) presented a theoretical analysis of these two identities, whereas van Knippenberg and van Schie (2000) were among the first to empirically distinguish between those forms of nested identities. These and several other authors have suggested that the identities and roles associated with smaller entities should be stronger than roles associated with the larger organization. Among other reasons (see Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008, for an exhaustive list of arguments), this is mainly the case because (a) employees in their everyday workplace interactions are more likely to encounter people from other groups and departments rather than those from different organizations, which renders the smaller category more salient, and (b) the principle of optimal distinctiveness (Brewer, 1991) suggests that employees at the same time want to "stand out" as unique individuals and "fit in" into groups to satisfy their needs for belonging; integrating these two motivational forces should be easier in small, exclusive roles than in large, inclusive ones. That said, those individuals in boundary-spanner roles may experience the opposite (e.g., Bartel, 2001).

However, supporting the general notion, Riketta and van Dick (2005) found that team identification is stronger than organizational identification. This does not automatically mean, however, that role identifications attached to more localized roles are more important for the prediction and/or development of the broad range of individual attitudes and behaviors. Instead, although more localized identification is stronger, the identification and the behavior in question must match (see van Dick, Christ, et al., 2004). This has been termed the *identity-matching principle* by Ullrich, Wieseke, Christ, Schulze, and van Dick (2007; see also Ashforth et al., 2008), who proposed that the respective relevant identity needs to "match" (i.e., address the same domain or level of behavior to be of predictive value). In line with this principle, Ullrich et al. (2007) found that organizational identification predicted organization-level customer-oriented behavior, whereas corporate identification predicted corporate citizenship behavior. Christ, van Dick, Wagner, and Stellmacher (2003) found organizational identification in schools to be

related to teachers' school-related extra-role behavior, whereas team identification was most closely related to helping behavior directed toward the teachers' immediate colleagues.

In sum, the individual has multiple role identities, and the level of salience determines which of those identities become relevant for his or her behavior provided that there is a match between identity and behavior and requisite role identification. Sometimes, those multiple role identities may be in conflict, for instance, when a manager who identifies with his or her role needs to give negative feedback to a subordinate who is also a member of the manager's team and therefore an ingroup member. These conflicting aspects of an individual's roles and attached role identities can be a source of great strain. In the following section, we briefly explain how these conflicts can sometimes also lead to processes of disidentification with negative consequences for the individual's satisfaction and well-being. At other times, different identities complement each other or even positively interact. Van Dick, van Knippenberg, Kerschreiter, Hertel, and Wieseke (2008), for instance, recently found (across two samples of bank and travel agency employees) that in cases of positive overlap (i.e., high work group and organizational identification), identifications are more strongly associated with job satisfaction and extra-role behavior than when only one of the identifications is high. In addition, Sluss and Ashforth (2008) proposed that organizationally nested relational identification may converge with organization identification, given that nested identifications prime and resemble each other, eliciting similar responses.

Future Research on Multiple Roles

Future research on multiple role identities may reap rewards by focusing on targets (foci) that have not received much attention in the past, such as individuals whose careers or occupations or roles have only relatively recently been created in larger numbers. One example is the "portfolio worker" who is working for several clients simultaneously, perhaps taking the role of a consultant with one client, a more managerial role with a second client, and a team-member role with a third client. A second example is the individual who is a member of category or who holds a role that is not viewed as particularly positive by society (e.g., a worker who produces land mines), but role identification remains important for the individual's self-concept and should receive more research attention (e.g., Ashforth, Kreiner, Clark, & Fugate, 2007; Kreiner, Ashforth, & Sluss, 2006).

Third, in a related vein, very little research has looked into ambivalent or even negative forms of identification, that is, when individuals actively dissociate from certain aspects of their roles. Kreiner and Ashforth (2004) referred to this as *disidentification,* which occurs when an individual defines him- or herself as not having the same attributes or principles that he or she believes define the organization. A manager, for instance, might identify with his or her role and particularly with the positive impact he or she potentially can make on followers by providing developmental feedback, vision, and guidance. On the other hand, the same manager might disidentify with other aspects of the role, for instance, the requirement to make promotion decisions or to lay off staff. Kreiner and Ashforth emphasized that disidentification is not just the opposite of identification. They argued that

> disidentification is a separate variable and a unique psychological state. Whereas identification consists of connecting (typically positive) aspects of the organization (whether at the molar or facet level) to oneself, disidentification consists of disconnecting (typically negative) aspects of the organization (whether at the molar or facet level) from oneself. Although a major goal of both identification and disidentification is preservation of a positive social identity, the paths to that goal and the phenomenology of the experience differ appreciably. (p. 3)

Kreiner and Ashforth have suggested items to measure disidentification with the organization, and it would be fruitful to use these scales particularly with respect to role identities; a lot is to be done on this interesting research front.

Fourth, it would certainly be of great theoretical and practical value to examine the complex interplay of the various factors that drive role identity salience, which are (a) relational (i.e., relational depth/breadth, relational identification), (b) structural (i.e., comparative and normative and fit), and (c) personal (i.e., accessible or chronic role identification). Finally, in our view, future research should pay more attention to both the identity-matching principle (Ullrich et al., 2007; see also Ashforth et al., 2008) and also effects of role identities that are potentially in conflict.

ROLE CRAFTING

Just as role identity salience (within organizations) is somewhat dynamic, so are the behavioral expectations attached to one's organizational roles. As such, the defining, negotiating, and crafting of the role itself is an important topic for role theory within organizations. Unfortunately, the research streams in this area are disparate and incommunicative. We use *role crafting* as a broad term to integrate and review the research that focuses on the establishment and subsequent change of roles within organizations. The streams include (a) role making/taking (Graen & Cashman, 1975; Jablin, 1987; Katz & Kahn, 1978; Quick, 1979); (b) role definition (Bolino, 1999; Morgeson & Camnion, 1997; Hofmann, Morgeson, & Gerras, 2003; Organ, 1988; Organ, 1990; Parker, 1998; Tepper et al., 2001); (c) (forms of) role innovation (Frese, Fay, Hilburger, Leng, & Tag, 1997; Frese, Kring, Soose, & Zempel, 1996; Morrison & Phelps, 1999; Staw & Boettger, 1990; van Maanen & Schein, 1979; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001); and (d) role clarity (Bush & Busch, 1981; Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964; Teas, Wacker, & Hughes, 1979). We briefly define each area and present current research findings. Then, we suggest future research directions across the streams that encompass role crafting.

Role Making/Taking

Role making is the process by which two individuals shape and reinforce desired roles through reciprocation. This reciprocation is aimed at increasing mutual trust and exchange of benefits that often occur between a leader and a member—leader–member exchange (Graen & Cashman, 1975; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Schriesheim, Castro, & Cogliser, 1999). Gerstner and Day (1997) meta-analytically found that leader–member exchange is related to leader performance ratings ($r = .49$), member performance ratings ($r = .31$), satisfaction with supervision ($r = .74$), overall satisfaction ($r = .50$), organizational commitment ($r = .38$), role conflict ($r = -.40$), role clarity ($r = .34$), and turnover intentions ($r = -.27$). For example, Erik, a project manager, may provide Jason, a project member, with valuable resources and increased responsibilities after Jason has demonstrated that he is a reliable project member. Likewise, Jason may use his acquired resources to help reduce Erik's workload.

Role taking is when organizational members learn and accept roles through organizational socialization, instruction, and feedback (Jablin, 1987; Katz & Kahn, 1978). Role taking involves individuals assuming expected roles to align their actions with social norms—viewing themselves as objects of a desirable social transaction (Heimer & Matsueda, 1994). When role taking is reciprocated, joint activity is facilitated and levels of social control increase (Mead, 1934). Together, role making and role taking influence how a role is defined and crafted, with the source being the role occupant, the counterrole occupant (i.e., role sender), and the organization. As such, there are various interpersonal and institutional pressures that affect the creation, maintenance, and augmentation of roles.

Role-taking behavior is driven by five major factors: (a) meaning of the self, (b) attitude about role and role sender, (c) anticipating reactions of the role sender, (d) associating with the role senders, and (e) absence of reflective thought with regard to role-sender suggestions (Heimer & Matsueda, 1994), In short, role taking becomes a somewhat passive process in which the role occupant "takes on" the prescribed role sans any type of proactive augmentation of the role. For example, Jason, the project member, may assume more of a leadership role if he (a) perceives himself as having the potential to be a leader and believes that the role sender also perceives him as being a leader, (b) wishes to be a leader and would welcome the opportunity to work more closely

with the role sender, (c) anticipates that the role sender will embrace him as a leader, (d) associates with the role sender for a sufficient amount of time to know how to assume the role of a leader, and (e) responds habitually to the cues of the role sender via learned routines and adopted scripts rather than deliberate cognition—thus, taking on the given role.

In addition to these factors, the cultural backgrounds of both the role taker and the role sender are important, such as family orientation, collectivism/individualism, power distance, and time orientation (Stone-Romero, Stone, & Salas, 2003). An individual's culture is important because it has demonstrated an influence over individual beliefs, emotions, and values (Hofstede, 1991; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1980; Zavalloni, 1980). According to the similarity-attraction paradigm, individuals tend to be more attracted to those whom they perceive as similar to themselves (Byrne, 1961). As such, the frequency of communication, relational identification, and rate of social integration increase when similarity is perceived—often due to a perception of trust and association between similar individuals (Bond, 1983; Bond & Forgas, 1984; Lincoln & Miller, 1979; O'Reilly, Caldwell, & Barnett, 1989; Thomas & Ravlin, 1995; Zenger & Lawrence, 1989).

In many interactions, an individual's expectations are based on stereotypical assumptions. This is especially true when information is incomplete because of a lack of similarity or incompatible cultural schema (Bell, Wicklund, Manko, & Larkin, 1976; Thomas & Ravlin, 1995). As such, prior information about a person (or cultural group) is factored into how one behaves and constructs work roles (cf. Ajzen & Fishbein, 1975; Darley & Fazio, 1980; Ginossar & Trope, 1980). For example, the interaction between a manager and subordinate will be contingent on whether the work is performed in the home country of the manager. When the subordinate has a strong national identification, variation in the manager's behavior from the subordinate's behavioral expectations will be attributed to external causes, such as cultural differences, thus compounding the perception of dissimilarity (Pinkley, LaPrelle, Pyszczynski, & Greenberg, 1988). Managers will attempt to mitigate these effects by engaging in culturally adaptive behaviors, accommodating the subordinates' cultural norms (to the extent that the norms are known to the manager). Otherwise, subordinates are likely to experience decreases in self-esteem while perceiving their manager to be untrustworthy and ineffective (Francis, 1991; Giles & Smith, 1979; Thomas & Ravlin, 1995).

Role making has focused mainly on the outcomes of a mutually committed and high quality relationship (via leader–member exchange theory; Gertsner & Day, 1997). Although scholars have criticized the role-making literature as lacking a chronological cohesion and adequate explanation as to the rationale of how role making develops (Schriesheim, Castro, & Cogliser, 1999), Bauer and Green (1996) revealed that as individuals endeavor to engage in role making (via leader–member exchange), both the leader and member attempt to evaluate the behavior and underlying motivations of the relational other and then make a choice as to the nature and degree of relational exchange to pursue. Contributing to whether individuals will pursue and succeed in forging valuable exchange relationships are perceived individual similarities, which are followed by trust (Dienesch & Liden, 1986; Graen & Scandura, 1987; Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995; Meglino, Ravlin, & Adkins, 1989). Trust is a significant contributor toward the development of the exchange relationship because trust increases behavior predictability by establishing a common system of communication and providing more stable interactions (Blau, 1964; Dienesch & Liden, 1986; Meglino, Ravlin, & Adkins, 1991). As trust increases, greater levels of delegation ensue, freeing the leader to expend less energy on the delegated duties while augmenting the scope of the member's desired responsibilities (Barber, 1983; Mayer et al., 1995). Thus, leader–member exchange is also a trust-building exercise. As such, trust is both an antecedent and consequence of leader–member exchange over time (Bauer & Green, 1996).

Role making can also develop through the use of socialization tactics. Organizations use socialization tactics to facilitate newcomer assimilation from one role to another (van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Van Maanen and Schein list the following six dimensions, referred to as *socialization processes:* collective (vs. individual), formal (vs. informal), sequential (vs. random), fixed (vs. variable), serial (vs. disjunctive),

and investiture (vs. divestiture). Of these, the institutionalized tactics (collective, formal, serial, and investiture) are more likely to lead to individuals passively accepting prescribed roles, whereas the individualized tactics (individual, informal, random, variable, disjunctive, and divestiture) tend to result in individuals being more proactive in shaping (or making) their roles (Ashforth, Sluss, & Harrison, 2007; Ashforth, Sluss, & Saks, 2007; Jones, 1986).

Role Definition

Thus far, we have discussed role behavior as unidimensional. However, individuals performing similar activities may define their roles quite differently and assume broader in-role responsibilities than others, whereas others may view their roles narrowly (Hofmann et al., 2003; Morrison, 1994; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). Individuals may also define roles according to time horizons or values—whether their role orientation is long term (vs. short term) or collaborative (vs. individual; Ashforth, 2001; Parker, 2007). As such, roles (rather than being defined objectively) are contingent upon individual differences, socialization, and role orientation (Graen, 1976; Hofmann et al., 2003; Korsgaard, Sapienza, & Schweiger, 2002; Morrison, 1994; Parker, 2007; Parker, Wall, & Jackson, 1997; Robinson, Kraatz, & Rousseau, 1994; Saks & Ashforth, 1997; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978).

As such, role behavior may be construed as either falling within the prescribed role (i.e., in-role behavior) or as beneficial for the role but not required (i.e., extra-role behavior). Role definition, a part of the role-crafting process, attempts to categorize these behaviors. Role definition takes shape as individuals form perceptions of their work role on the basis of role preference, role ability, and expectations of others—with an ongoing assessment and subsequent modifications occurring as social cues and individual inclinations converge (or diverge; Graen, 1976; N. Turner, Chmiel, & Walls, 2005). More specifically, the distinction between in-role behavior and extra-role behavior is that in-role behavior consists of activities that are formally required and rewarded, whereas extra-role activities are neither required nor rewarded (Katz & Kahn, 1978; Organ, 1990). In addition, extra-role activities are discretionary activities not directly associated with a job description or formal reward system (Katz & Kahn, 1978). Even though performance of in-role activities is more likely than performance of extra-role behaviors (Morrison, 1994), extra-role behaviors are essential for organizations to thrive and function (Organ, 1988). For example, when task completion is contingent upon helping behavior, helping (i.e., extra-role behavior) becomes an integral component to task interdependence. As such, the extra-role behavior becomes embedded within what may be expected as in-role behavior (Griffin, Neal, & Parker, 2007).

The most prominent of the extra-role behaviors is organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), which is a similar construct to contextual performance (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993). OCBs are extra-role activities primarily related to prosocial, contextual performance rather than to task performance (Bolino, 1999; Organ, 1988, 1990). There are two major dimensions of OCBs: altruism (behavior that benefits specific individuals) and conscientiousness (behavior that benefits the organization; Rioux & Penner, 2001). For example, Jennifer may sense that Taylor is having a challenging workday and offer to take Taylor to lunch, with the principal benefit going to Taylor (as an altruistic act by Jennifer). In short, Jennifer's primary concern is the well-being of Taylor. Likewise, Jennifer may offer to help Taylor practice for an upcoming client presentation—thus benefiting the organization.

OCB role perceptions encompass perceived role breadth, perceived instrumentality, perceived role efficacy, and perceived role discretion (McAllister, Morrison, Kamdar, & Turban, 2007). For example, job autonomy and cognitive ability positively related to role breadth, with role breadth in turn mediating the relationship between job autonomy and job performance as well as the relationship between cognitive ability and job performance (Hofmann et al., 2003; Morgeson, Delaney-Klinger, & Hemingway, 2005; Morrison, 1994; Parker, 1998; Parker, Williams, & Turner, 2006). McAllister et al. (2007) demonstrated that these role perceptions provide further precision with regard to our understanding concerning in-role versus extra-role perceptions. For example, higher levels of perceived instrumentality may be concurrent with lower levels of perceived role

discretion, thus confounding the extra-role perception. As such, it is efficacious to recognize these role perceptions as conceptually and empirically different, with relatively independent effects.

With regard to perceived role discretion, the discretionary nature of OCBs facilitates the expression of individual employee attitudes (Organ, 1977). Several scholars have argued that OCBs are contingent upon perceived fairness (Moorman, 1991; Moorman, Niehoff, & Organ, 1993; Organ & Konovsky, 1989). As such, in response to fair treatment, individuals will perform OCBs as a compensatory reward. Likewise, individuals will withhold OCBs as a retaliatory response to unfairness. This behavior is consistent with Adams's (1965) equity theory and Blau's (1964) social exchange theory in that OCBs may be used to reciprocally restore equity (Tepper et al., 2001). Similarly, Morrison (1994) found that employees with favorable attitudes tend to view OCBs as in-role behavior (vs. extra-role behavior). This may be because viewing OCBs as part of one's job is compatible with holding favorable attitudes and being a good citizen; however, it is also possible that this correlation is more a product of a socially desirable position driven by impression management and/or social exchange tactics rather than being based on bona-fide beliefs (Bolino, 1999; Morrison, 1994; Organ, 1990).

Likewise, there is a link between OCBs and role identity—with OCBs being likely to increase as an individual's role identity increases. Finkelstein and Penner (2004) found empirical evidence linking role identity with OCBs ($r = .38$). Because a particular role is internalized and becomes part of the individual's self-concept, individuals begin to identify with normative expectations when a role identity is redefined by the increasing congruence between the self and the collective over time, with the individual striving to behave consistent with the emerging role (Piliavin & Callero, 1991). Thus, contributions to a collective through OCBs become a part of who one is rather than just what one does; the boundary between in-role and extra-role behavior often remains elusive, obscuring role expectations and incentives. This is especially true when unfixed roles evolve because of negotiation, clarification, and identification. The ramifications for completing a mandatory (vs. discretionary) activity may elicit a broad spectrum of reactions, ranging from reward to rebuke (Morrison, 1994).

Role Innovation

Once a role is defined, individuals may find that the role needs augmentation, revision, or, at times, wholesale change. Scholars have explored this need via role innovation. Role innovation is when individuals, leaders, and organizations instigate role modifications aimed at enhancing outcomes (e.g., Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Role innovation includes taking charge, personal initiative, task revision, and job crafting. Taking charge and personal initiative are ways for individuals to be more assertive in shaping work roles. Taking charge and personal initiative involve individuals making informal, voluntary, and discretionary efforts in order to effectuate organizational improvements, particularly with regard to problem solving as well as during times of change (Frese et al., 1996; Frese et al., 1997; Morrison & Phelps, 1999; Wrzesniewski & Dutton 2001). Individuals are more likely to demonstrate personal initiative when the work is more complex and within their control (Frese, Garst, & Fay, 2007; Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Parker et al., 1997). As such, when individuals are confronted with complex tasks and are granted sufficient control over the task, they tend to engage in proactive behaviors in order to gain the requisite knowledge and skills to overcome potential obstacles to effective task completion, rather than to just react to problems (Parker, Williams, & Turner, 2006). Inasmuch as one's control orientation is high (i.e., aspires for control, perceives opportunities for control, and has high levels of self-efficacy), there is a strong relationship between control/complexity and personal initiative (Frese et al., 2007). As individuals assume broader job responsibilities through proactive workplace behaviors—being accountable for organizational goals rather than just individual goals—they develop a flexible role orientation (Parker, 2007). As such, there is a positive relationship between a flexible role orientation and performance ($r = .37$) that increases over time ($r = .46$). Likewise, this relationship is moderated by high job autonomy ($r = .41$; Parker, 2007).

Taking charge and personal initiative can lead to task revision. *Task revision* is when action is taken to redirect work from a faulty task (Staw & Boettger, 1990); it occurs when certain norms and processes are rejected in favor of new practices and procedures relative to task performance and relationships, matching actual requirements with current needs, skills, and abilities of the majority of the employees (Nicholson, 1984; Schein. 1971; van Maanen & Schein, 1979; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001).

Job crafting is a proactive process by which individuals endeavor to modify the physical and cognitive aspects of their tasks or relationships in the workplace (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Individuals are now increasingly usurping crafting license once held only by leaders, proactively guiding work roles and career trajectories (Bridges, 1994; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). As such, role innovation is being reshaped through an improvisational and evolutionary process crafted by the individual and permitted by the organization. Rather than passively assuming a preconstructed role shaped by proficiency and adaptivity, individuals are claiming latitude in proactively crafting a more desirable work role (Grant, 2007; Griffin et al., 2007). For example, Bill, a project member, may wish to take a more active role with regard to the budgetary component of the project. Bill becomes proactive in learning and completing budgetary tasks. After which, Bill lobbies the project manager to revise Bill's role to include budgetary responsibilities (possibly replacing other less-desirable responsibilities).

Contemporary role innovation tactics advance a more bottom-up perspective that empowers self-determined and competent individuals to play a more active role on the organizational stage through creative identity, forging new parametric contours through proactive crafting (Grant, 2007; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). This process has led to organizations and individuals entering into idiosyncratic deals (I-deals; Rousseau, 2005). *I-deals* are informal arrangements between a worker and employer that provide sufficient flexibility to meet the needs of both parties. As such, I-deals are often unique collaborations that facilitate experimentation and innovation in negotiating the parameters of a job—quid pro quo arrangements that yield mutually beneficial outcomes (Rousseau, 2005). Ilgen and Hollenbeck (1991) broached the issue of role evolution and emergence; however, their view was that the job did not actually change, only the role changed. Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) argued that both the job and role change, rejecting the notion that jobs remain objective, irrespective of work role changes.

Scholars have argued that individuals engage in role innovation to fulfill three needs: control, positive self-image, and connection to others (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Braverman, 1974; Frese et al., 2007; Parker et al., 1997; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). If individuals are satisfying these needs elsewhere, they may choose not to engage in role innovation (Caldwell & O'Reilly, 1990). Individual needs vary based on how individuals view their work—as a job, career, or calling. To the extent possible, individuals will endeavor to craft their work role in accordance with how they view their work. For example, individuals who view their work as a job will craft much different work roles than those who view their work as a calling (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton. 1985; Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, & Schwartz, 1997). Individuals who feel their organization would not permit or support role innovation may also be deterred from contemporary role innovation activities (Caldwell & O'Reilly, 1990). For example, high control industries such as telemarketing and manufacturing are less likely to welcome role innovation, whereas low-control industries, wherein autonomy and creativity are more prevalent, are more likely to embrace role innovation (Amabile, Tighe, Hill, & Hennessey 1994; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001).

Extant research has found that role innovation antecedents are proactivity, openness to negotiation, and work facilitation, whereas potential consequences include job satisfaction and negative role conflict (Ashford, 1986; Graen & Scandura, 1987; Katz & Kahn, 1978; Kristof, 1996; V. D. Miller, Johnson, Hart, & Peterson, 1999; V. D. Miller & Jablin, 1991; K. I. Miller & Monge, 1986; Morrison, 1993; Schein, 1971). Socialization tactics are also associated with role innovation. Researchers have suggested that institutionalized socialization tactics tend to create a negative relationship between socialization tactics

and role innovation, whereas individualized socialization tactics often lead to a positive relationship between socialization tactics and role innovation (N. J. Allen & Meyer, 1990; Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Baker, 1995; Jones, 1986; King & Sethi, 1992; Mignerey, Rubin, & Gorden, 1995). However, Ashforth, Sluss, and Harrison (2007) reminded us that institutionalized socialization tactics only constitute a process, wherein the content may vary. As such, institutionalized tactics may also be used to promote innovation, although contained within the parameters set forth by the organization (Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Ashforth, Sluss, & Harrison, 2007).

Role Clarity

Irrespective of whether the role is crafted and defined by means of role making, role taking, or role innovation, it is imperative that role expectations be clear. When role expectations are unambiguous, role clarity ensues. *Role clarity* refers to whether an individual has certainty with regard to expectations surrounding his or her work role (Bush & Busch, 1981; Kahn et al., 1964; Teas et al., 1979). Conversely, *role ambiguity* is antonymous with role clarity and refers to one's degree of uncertainty as to expected behaviors and attitudes (Kahn et al., 1964). Thus, role clarity and role ambiguity are conceptual opposites, with presence or absence of clarity being the sole distinction (Sawyer, 1992). Herein, our focal construct is role clarity.

Empirical evidence demonstrates that there are several antecedents of role clarity. These antecedents include newcomer information seeking ($r = .17$), institutionalized socialization tactics ($r = .27$), detailed feedback from others, and participating in decision making (Bauer, Bodner, Erdogan, Truxillo, & Tucker, 2007). *Newcomer information seeking* refers to newcomers being proactive in their search for information pertaining to their work relationships and tasks. Because newcomers are actively and curiously pursuing relevant facts, effective newcomer information seeking facilitates the transmission of knowledge from organizational insiders to new role occupants both in terms of quality as well as frequency, thus increasing role clarity (Berger, 1979; Falcione & Wilson, 1988; van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Also, during the newcomer adjustment process, organizations tend to use institutionalized socialization tactics to increase newcomer assimilation from one role to another (van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Institutionalized socialization tactics reduce newcomer uncertainty by controlling the type, source, and ease of attaining information (D. G. Allen, 2006; Bauer et al., 2007; Jones, 1986; Saks & Ashforth, 1997). In response to information seeking, feedback from others is the process by which individuals receive guidance regarding previous behavior and can be a means by which clear and direct information is communicated relative to performance of work roles (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Recognition, praise, or even reprimand provides clarity by signaling either acceptance or disapproval of behavior (Young, Worchel, & Woehr, 1998). Feedback from others is one of the most effective ways to clarify work roles, with the effect size depending on valence, response mode, and directness (Rotheram, LaCour, & Jacobs, 1982; Unzicker, Clow, & Babakus, 2000). Last, participation in decision making also tends to increase role clarity. Individuals who are permitted to participate in the decision-making process achieve increased role clarity through perceived empowerment, control, and legitimacy. This perception helps reconcile ambiguous work roles and augment understanding of expectations. The iterative nature of decision making often helps to elucidate work roles for the participants (Gilmore & Mooreland, 2000; Teas, 1980, 1983; Teas et al., 1979).

Role clarity also has a plethora of important work-related consequences. Role clarity provides a structured and predictable working environment wherein individuals are able to cognitively master the causal structures that affect their lives (DeCarlo, Teas, & McElroy, 1997; Sujan, 1986). Role clarity also increases job performance, both over the short term and over time (Churchill, Ford, Hartley, & Walker, 1985; Fried, et al., 2003). Role clarity is a harbinger of proactivity, confidence, and commitment (V. D. Miller & Jablin, 1991; Saks & Ashforth, 1997; Spreitzer, Kizilos, & Nason, 1997), increasing meaning, competence, and self-determination (Hall, 2008) while reducing negative strain (Abramis, 1994; Behrman & Perreault 1984; Fry, Futrell, Parasuraman, & Chmielewski, 1986; Jackson & Schuler, 1985; Revicki, Whitley, Gallery, & Allison,

1993; Teas, 1980; Von Emster & Harrison, 1998) as well as resulting in higher levels of self-efficacy (Chen & Bliese, 2002). Role clarity has also been found to mediate the relationship between information/feedback seeking and extra-role behavior (e.g., OCB; Whitaker, Dahling, & Levy, 2007). Role clarity also conditions the relationship between job demand and job strain such that higher role clarity reduces the negative impact of job demands on job strain (Lang, Thomas, Bliese, & Adler, 2007). In sum, role clarity positively influences job performance ($r = .29$), organizational commitment ($r = .29$), job satisfaction ($r = .32$), and self-efficacy ($r = .45$; Babin & Boles, 1996; Bauer et al., 2007; Chen & Bliese, 2002; de Ruyter, Wetzels, & Feinberg, 2001).

Future Research in Role Crafting

Given the wide berth of role crafting, we overlay our role identity salience model to suggest several future research directions. First, although much research has been conducted with regard to role making (see Gerstner & Day 1997; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Schriesheim et al., 1999), we believe much progress could be made in terms of understanding role identity salience through a dyadic process. What happens to role identity salience when the extant dyad has not been properly defined? Do the subordinate (member) and leader follow different role-making or negotiation processes to achieve role clarity? Do both role occupants need to include the role at similar levels of salience in order to successfully negotiate their respective roles? These questions also bring to light a need to focus on the dyad as the locum of action. We suggest scholars use more dynamic and dyadically focused methods such as longitudinal survey techniques testing for the ebbs and flows of consensus/agreement, qualitative observational methods that analyze dyadic processes, or more dynamic approaches (e.g., dynamic interactionism; Hattrup & Jackson, 1996).

Second, scholars need to better understand how individuals define what is in-role versus extra-role behavior and how that influences helping behavior. An individual's definition of his or her work role—whether the employee interprets the helping behavior as being in-role or extra-role—makes a difference (Tepper et al., 2001). We speculate that exploring the drivers of role identity salience may provide insight into how individuals include extra-role behavior as part of the core role definition. Will relational breadth and depth increase role breadth so as to increase the chance that the extra-role behavior is seen as core to the role? We suggest using relational/social network methodologies wherein the role is the center of the network and thus produces an operationalization of relational breadth and depth. Research has also shown that helping behaviors increase as they are perceived as in-role expectations, for example, as a result of being rewarded (even implicitly) for the behavior. We speculate that role identification may increase the probability of helping behaviors, regardless of how they are perceived (i.e., in-role vs. extra-role).

Third, the level and form of role crafting can vary according to context. Job crafting covers broad degrees of change, whereas job shaping suggests deals only with small scale changes in work roles (Lyons, 2006; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Future research should examine contextual variables to determine which factors are more suitable to significant role modification and which conditions permit only slight role changes. These contexts may include the nature of work, organizational culture, and leadership style. For example, virtual work provides a rich context within which to examine what happens when one's role may be significant although temporary (at best) or fleeting and ill-defined (at worst). Within virtual work as well as the context of telecommuting, does role crafting take on a less significant role in one's work experience? Or, because of the decreased structure and an increased need for control, does role crafting become even more important? In sum, research that assesses how dynamic working environments affect the degree to which roles are enacted may help clarify contextual implications relative to role crafting. That said, chronic accessibility of the role identity may overpower the context in that the individual attempts to radically change the role so as to better match the chronically accessible role identity.

Fourth, drawing from a relational view of role identity theory, future research should focus on deciphering the relationship between role identification and role innovation. For example, when role

innovation takes place, are individuals crafting a role that reflects who they are as opposed to a role that is more indicative of who they should be? What are the conditions under which individuals craft salient roles that are closely associated with their identification, versus crafting roles that are relatively disassociated with who they are? Because of the importance of role identity salience, we speculate that there may be a significant difference between role innovators who shape salient roles that are higher versus lower on the salience hierarchy. Finally, Ashforth, Sluss, and Harrison (2007) suggested the potential for delineated role innovation as either conducted unilaterally or collaboratively. Future research should examine the functional and dysfunctional components of unilateral role innovation (vs. collaborative) as it pertains to role salience. For example, it would be useful to know the conditions and extent to which the relationship between role innovation and role salience is moderated by the level of unilateral (vs. collaborative) innovation.

Last, scholars should also explore how role identity salience affects role clarity and its outcomes. For example, what are the limits of role salience when roles are not clear? What happens to the role salience once roles are clarified? Do less salient roles need to be clear? Will clarifying less salient roles make them more salient and more likely to conflict with other roles? Because role clarity provides individuals with additional information about their roles, we know that role clarity can result in decreased role salience when undesirable aspects about a role are revealed. As such, it seems logical to conclude that the level of role salience will be contingent upon whether the clarifying information is viewed as negative or positive. Of course, clarifying one's role early on in the socialization process may inhibit individuals from crafting a desired role—especially, for example, if it is made clear that an individual's appropriate role is to be more reactive than proactive. In short, there may be adverse consequences to individuals having a clear understanding about an undesired role. Nevertheless, Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) contended that successful role crafting can occur even in jobs that have low levels of autonomy, authority, or complexity because individuals alter the way in which they perform their assigned tasks and frame work relationships. For example, they illustrated how nurses changed their role by paying more attention to patients, even though this additional attention was not formally prescribed. Of course, employers who choose to precisely clarify a role by providing the exact way a task should be performed (and have a means to enforce this stringent requirement) may elicit negative consequences as they provide excessive levels of role clarity. Notwithstanding, we speculate that role salience will be attenuated by role ambiguity irrespective of the nature of the information revealed, because role ambiguity tends to increase uncertainty, perpetuate cognitive dissonance, and decrease relational identification.

A NEW DIRECTION: ROLE RECOVERY

We have discussed the various ways in which roles can be defined, negotiated, and even innovated (Graen & Cashman, 1975; Grant, 2007; Jablin, 1987; Katz & Kahn, 1978; V. D. Miller et al., 1999; Posner & Butterfield, 1978; Quick, 1979; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). We also understand that established roles can yield varying levels of clarity and consensus (Biddle, 1979; Bush & Busch, 1981; Kahn et al., 1964; Quick, 1979; Teas et al., 1979). It is surprising, however, that we know less about what happens when expectations for established roles are not met. How do the role occupants recover both the productivity and the familiarity within the relationship? We speculate that the forgiveness literature may provide important insights into how role recovery may happen. Indeed, role recovery is not specifically defined in the extant literature. *Role recovery* is a term we use to signify the restoration of role expectations through forgiveness—again, restoring both that which is exchanged in the relationship and the relationship itself.

Understanding Role Recovery

Individuals are imperfect and will inevitably be perceived to violate accepted relational norms that govern relationships and shape role expectations (Rusbult, Hannon, Stocker, & Finkel, 2005). Role violations can be classified as a breach in the psychological contract. The *psychological contract* is defined as a set of agreements—albeit unwritten—pertaining to

expectations about the giving and receiving of benefits within an organization (Argyris, 1960; Robinson, 1996; Robinson & Morrison, 2000; Schein, 1965; Thomas, Au, & Ravlin, 2003). These expectations may involve workplace promotions, training, job security, and empowerment (Rousseau, 1989; Turnley & Feldman, 2000). The psychological contract emerges as a cognitive representation of perceived mutual obligations between individuals and can be useful in simplifying multifaceted workplace circumstances and relationships (Shore & Tetrick, 1994; Thomas et al., 2003).

Scholars have classified the psychological contract as being either transactional or relational, depending on one's conceptualization of the contract (Rousseau, 1989). Individuals can have large discrepancies with regard to the underpinnings of the psychological contract (Thomas et al., 2003). The transactional psychological contract suggests an exchange-based agreement that is classified as being short term, limited in level of involvement, and viewed as a practical means to an end. The relational psychological contract suggests an identity-based understanding that is categorized as being long term, intensive in level of involvement, and perceived as evoking collective interests (Brown, 1997; Parks & Schmedemann, 1994; Suchman, 1995; Thomas et al., 2003). Individuals perceive a violation to a psychological contract when others act contrary to the perceived parameters of the contract (Rousseau, 1995; Morrison & Robinson, 1997). Psychological contract violations can occur when referent others either intentionally or unintentionally violate the contract, with intentional violations being perceived as more severe violations.

When a role violation has occurred and a breach in the psychological contract is perceived, various possible responses are available to affected individuals. Individuals may choose to be angry, bitter, and indignant or even opt for revenge or punitive retribution (Allred, 1999; Bies & Tripp, 1996; Stuckless & Goranson, 1992). Moreover, individuals may choose estrangement (Aquino, Tripp, & Bies, 2006), avoidance, escape, exit (McCullough et al., 1998; Rusbult et al., 2005), cognitive dissonance, denial (Latack, 1986), forgetting (Smedes, 1984, 1996), or feigned forgiveness via impression management tactics (Bies, 1987; Cody & McLaughlin, 1990; Goffman, 1961; Schlenker, 1980; Tomlinson & Mayer, 2009). Conversely, individuals may attempt to recover the relationship through the process of forgiveness. *Forgiveness* facilitates role recovery because it entails (at least) the removal of negative feelings, cognition, or behavior (Aquino, Grover, Goldman, & Folger, 2003; Horsbrugh, 1974; Lewis, 1980; Murphy, 1988; North, 1987; Richards, 1988) and may also include the return of positive feelings, cognition, and/or behavior (Aquino et al., 2003; Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003; Tangney, Wagner, Hill-Barlow, Marschall, & Gramzow, 1996).

Forgiveness and subsequent role recovery can yield several benefits related to work roles. These benefits include increased self-esteem, creativity, learning, and relational boundaries (Bright, Fry, & Cooperrider, 2006; Maltby, Day, & Barber, 2004; Sandage & Williamson, 2005; Strelan & Covic, 2006; Toussaint, Williams, Musick, & Everson, 2001). However, the perceived role violation should not be forgiven prematurely (Affinito, 1999; Exline, Worthington, Hill, & McCullough, 2003; Lamb & Murphy, 2002; Murphy, 2000; Wiesenthal, 1997). Premature role recovery may result in not adequately contemplating the long-term significance of the role violation (such as legal accountability as well as acceptable and salutary relational conduct; Exline et al., 2003). Because role recovery often requires sacrifice from both parties involved in the violation of role expectations, there needs to be a sufficient motivation from both parties to recover the role (Rusbult, Verette, Whitney, Slovik, & Lipkus, 1991; van Lange et al., 1997). For example, subordinates are more likely to forgive leaders than leaders are to forgive subordinates, especially within a procedurally just environment. This finding is attributed to subordinates having more to lose when roles are not recovered with a leader, particularly when fair processes are in place to evoke positive conflict resolution from leaders and subdue subordinate vigilantism (Aquino et al., 2006).

Finally, perceived justice or, in our case, injustice is a critical indicator of how difficult it will be for the role occupant (i.e., the one perceiving a breach) to "recover" and forgive. The nature of the role violation seems to be the largest contributor to how

unjust the violation is perceived. For example, injustice is more likely perceived when the "violator" (a) was responsible, (b) had intentionality, (c) could have avoided the violation, and (d) committed a severe offense (Bradfield & Aquino, 1999; Darby & Schlenker, 1982; Folger & Cropanzano, 1998; Girard & Mullet, 1997; Weiner, 1995). At the same time, injustice is less likely to be perceived when the violator is perceived to express a sincere apology, concedes responsibility, and acts to restore what was violated (Ohbuchi, Kameda, & Agarie, 1989).

Advancing Role Recovery

Because human imperfection can cloud understanding as to role clarity and role consensus, individuals may not sufficiently understand role expectations, thus preventing accurate detection of role violations (lack of role clarity; Bush & Busch, 1981; Posner & Butterfield, 1978). Likewise, individuals may not agree or come to consensus regarding each other's role expectations, thus being unwilling to adopt expected role behavior (lack of role consensus; Biddle, 1979; Quick, 1979). We know that leaders develop different reciprocal relationships with different group members (Graen & Cashman, 1975; Graen & Scandura, 1987), with the boundaries of these relationships being tested as the relationship forms.

We suggest that the leader–subordinate relationship is ripe for research concerning role recovery. When there is consensus as to dyadic role expectations, the relationship is likely to be of higher quality in terms of both social exchange and identity (Bauer & Green, 1996; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Maslyn & Uhl-Bien, 2001; Sluss & Ashforth, 2007; 2008; van Knippenberg, van Dick, & Tavares, 2007). Nevertheless, research has found that subordinate (member) role expectations are based more on social and developmental needs, whereas leader role expectations are based more on work-related issues (Baldwin, 1997; Baldwin & Baccus, 2003; Huang, Wright, Chiu, & Wang, 2008; Kim & Organ, 1982). As such, either party in the leader–subordinate relationship may perceive a role violation, whereas another perceives no breach. We suggest exploring the influence of role clarity (as well as the dyadic role-making process) in conjunction with role recovery. It may also be useful to examine how role recovery works when there are high levels of role clarity versus low levels.

Additionally, as there are individuals who internalize work and relational roles as part of who they are, there are also individuals who accept roles externally without embracing them internally. Likewise, there are benevolent forgivers who internalize feelings of empathy and compassion when forgiving, whereas there are pragmatic forgivers who may only forgive externally or for practical purposes (Bright et al., 2006). We recommend future research aimed at examining the effect role identification has on the role-recovery process. For example, is internalized forgiveness that is benevolent and compassionate required when there is strong relational and/or role identification? That is, if an individual has accepted a role as part of who he or she is, are feelings of benevolence and empathy toward the role violator required to restore the role relationship? Likewise, is pragmatic forgiveness sufficient when role identification is weak or of low intensity?

The term *role recovery* seems to suggest that what was sufficient for the original role would be sufficient for the recovered role. However, how does a transgression change role expectations? Furthermore, how does role recovery change role expectations? After role recovery, individuals may feel concerned about transgression recurrence, or they may be emboldened by the fact that their role could be restored. Furthermore, when the dyad is confronted with the need to forgive each other, how does role identity salience influence role recovery? Does forgiving a role expectation violation become more difficult when role identity salience is higher versus lower? Does it make a difference whether the role violator is, for example, a leader (vs. subordinate), or whether the violator views the dyad as more or less salient than the offender views the dyad?

These questions converge with symbolic interactionism's view of role theory wherein emphasis is given to individual participants and the evolution of roles through interaction, whereby the role is the product of the role participant's cumulative interaction (Biddle, 1986; Mead, 1934). As such, violations, indifference, and conformity are constantly shaping the status of the role. This leads to a potentially controversial question: Are roles stronger, in terms of

role salience, after recovering from a role violation than they were prior to the violation? Of course, there are probably various contextual contingencies (moderators) that would influence the answer to this question; nevertheless, answers to this question would shed significant light on role recovery and provide a more dynamic "role" for role theory within organizations.

CONCLUSION

Despite an ever faster changing workplace due to flatter hierarchies, virtual work, mergers, alliances, and the like, roles are still important to the human condition and may be more important than ever to help scholars understand what binds the individual and the organization and how the individual is able to cope with stress arising from change. Through our relational perspective of role theory in organizations, we attempted to reconcile the individuals' natural quest for stability and security with the environmental pressures to change and flexibly respond to new forms of organizing. The individual today both suffers and benefits from the pace of change: suffering from increasing ambiguity and decreasing clarity, but at the same time gaining from having more leeway for developing his or her own definition of what a specific role might entail or even creating new roles. In sum, we hope we have provided an analysis that is helpful for the organizational scholar and practitioner within industrial and organizational psychology as well as management to further develop modern approaches to roles within organizations.

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