

Do Organizational Practices Matter in Role Stress Processes? A Study of Direct and Moderating Effects for Marketing-Oriented Boundary Spanners

Previous research and meta-analyses suggest that the influence of organizational variables on boundary role stress processes is weak and marginal. Using the emerging work in organizational practices and configurations, the authors reexamine this relationship by addressing three critical gaps: (1) conceptualizing organizational environment as a multidimensional practices construct, (2) operationalizing the organizational environment as configurations or combinations of practices dimensions, and (3) testing for direct and moderating hypotheses. The results reveal that organizational practices matter significantly in boundary role stress processes. The findings show that procedural environments are dysfunctional because they engender higher levels of role stressors, reduce performance, and negatively affect the psychological well-being of boundary spanners. In contrast, the achievement and affective-oriented environments involve distinct trade-offs, because none is clearly superior. The authors discuss the theoretical implications for further research and provide recommendations for managerial practice.

The pivotal role of marketing-oriented boundary spanners (e.g., sales, customer service) in organizational effectiveness is recognized by researchers and practitioners alike, especially in times of relationship building (Ganesan 1994), interorganizational alliances (Webster 1992), and turbulent environments (Achrol 1991). Paradoxically, this recognition comes with the realization that boundary spanners are susceptible to high levels of role stress (Behrman and Perreault 1984; Belasco 1966; Michaels, Day, and Joachimsthaler 1987) and burnout (Singh, Goolsby, and Rhoads 1994). Concerned about its implications for behavioral outcomes and psychological well-being, researchers have accumulated an impressive body of knowledge about the consequences of role stressors for critical job outcomes, including the job satisfaction, performance, commitment, and turnover of marketing bound-

ary spanners (e.g., Behrman and Perreault 1984; Churchill, Ford, and Walker 1976; Michaels, Day, and Joachimsthaler 1987; Singh 1993). Summaries of this literature have appeared as meta-analysis in marketing (Brown and Peterson 1993) and in organizational psychology (Fisher and Gitelson 1983; Jackson and Schuler 1985).

Recently, marketers have begun to probe the effects of the organizational environment on boundary spanners' perceptions of role stress and its consequences for behavioral outcomes (Jaworski, Stathakopoulos, and Krishnan 1993; Singh 1993). Unfortunately, the vast majority of studies have tended to focus solely on an "individual-difference" analysis—that is, differential effects of individual perceptions, resources, and attitudes on job outcomes (Behrman and Perreault 1984; Churchill, Ford, and Walker 1976; Fry et al. 1986; Michaels, Day, and Joachimsthaler 1987; Ramaswami, Agarwal, and Bhargava 1993). Although this literature has provided useful insights, emerging views suggest that an explicit account of the organizational environment is necessary to understand fully boundary role stress processes and its consequences. We show that this view is not only intuitively appealing, but also is grounded in theories of role stress. Moreover, we discuss key issues involved in accounting for the effects of the organizational environment and posit hypotheses for its influence on boundary role stress processes. Finally, we empirically test our hypotheses and delineate the key insights obtained. We begin with a review of the relevant literature

Jagdeep Singh is Professor of Marketing, Weatherhead School of Management, Case Western Reserve University. Willem Verbeke is Assistant Professor of Marketing, School of Economics, Erasmus University. Gary K. Rhoads is Associate Professor of Marketing, Marriott School of Management, Brigham Young University. The authors thank the Marketing Science Institute for providing partial financial assistance in conducting the qualitative and quantitative phases of this research. Additional funding from the Weatherhead School of Management, Erasmus University, and David M. Kennedy Center for International Studies is also acknowledged. Finally, the authors thank the participating companies for their cooperation and assistance. Additional statistical details are available from the first author.

Literature Review and Study Rationale

Boundary Role Stress

Almost three decades ago, boundary role stress was recognized as a critical factor in the behavior and job-related attitudes of marketing professionals (Belasco 1966). Using the theoretical framework provided initially by Kahn and colleagues (1964), the boundary role stress literature in marketing focused its attention on two constructs in particular—role ambiguity (RA) and role conflict (RC)—and grew rapidly (Behrman and Perreault 1984; Churchill, Ford, and Walker 1976; Fry et al. 1986; Singh 1993). Although this literature is varied, rich, and still growing, three major turning points can be identified that underscore the significance of boundary role stress research. First, in their model of motivation and performance in industrial selling, Walker, Churchill, and Ford (1977) posited RA and RC as critical determinants of salesperson performance and satisfaction. This model spawned a whole stream of research, and the study of boundary role stress assumed critical importance. Second, about a decade later when Churchill and colleagues (1985) conducted a meta-analysis of key determinants of salesperson performance, they found that role perceptions correlated more highly with job performance than with any other predictor utilized. This helped place boundary role stress at the center of research efforts directed toward understanding the performance of boundary spanners in marketing. Third, the significance of boundary role stress was further elevated when Brown and Peterson (1993) published their meta-analysis of major antecedents of salesperson job satisfaction. On the basis of a comprehensive analysis of 59 usable studies corresponding to 254 effects, Brown and Peterson reported (1) boundary role stress constructs, namely, RA and RC, as the key direct antecedents of job satisfaction, with significant effects across studies and (2) a nomological model (based on theory) that captured the observed interrelationships (across studies) among boundary role stress, job satisfaction (JS), job performance (JP), organizational commitment (OC), and turnover intentions (TI) (see Figure 1). The second result is especially important because it helps distill the relevant literature down to a specific model of underlying processes that includes just nine interrelationships (shown in Figure 1).¹ In this model, RA and RC play a critical role by acting as direct antecedents of both JP and JS (paths 1–4 in Figure 1). Moreover, the influence of RC and RA on OC and TI is mediated by JP and JS (paths 5–8 in Figure 1). Finally, OC is specified as a direct determinant of TI (path 9 in Figure 1). Overall, Brown and Peterson's meta-analysis produced a reasonably sound foundation for modeling boundary role stress processes.

¹Brown and Peterson (1993) test several different variations of the model in Figure 1. Their "hypothesized" and "revised" models contain eight nomological relationships of which only six are common among the preceding models. The model in Figure 1 utilizes their hypothesized model and two additional paths (JS → TI and JP → TI).

Influence of Organizational Variables

Attempts have been made to study the influence of organizational variables on boundary role stress processes. These attempts are motivated by the view that role stress is not just an individual concern; instead, organizations influence how (individual) role stress emerges and affects critical (individual) outcomes (Hackman and Oldham 1976; Lazarus and Folkman 1984). Thus, understanding linkages between organizational variables and role stress processes is likely to aid organizations in developing a "low stress" environment, help boundary spanners cope with stress, and enhance boundary spanners' effectiveness (Churchill, Ford, and Walker 1976; Leigh, Lucas, and Woodman 1988).

Following Brown and Peterson (1993), we categorize organizational variables as (1) job/task and (2) supervisory characteristics. The job/task variables based on the job characteristics model (Hackman and Oldham 1976) include skill variety, task identity and significance, autonomy, job feedback, job complexity, job control, and job scope (Ramaswami, Agarwal, and Bhargava 1993). Using path goal theory (House 1971), marketers have examined supervisory variables, including role clarification, communication, feedback, close supervision, and consideration behaviors (Fry et al. 1986). Although mixed results have been obtained, in general, research indicates that *lower* levels of role stressors (e.g., RC and RA) and *higher* levels of job outcomes (e.g., JS, JP) are associated with varied, challenging, and enriching jobs/tasks (e.g., greater variety, autonomy, identity, feedback). Similarly, supportive supervisor behaviors (e.g., greater consideration, communication, closeness) are generally associated with *lower* levels of role stressors and *higher* levels of job outcomes.

Recently, interest has shifted toward organizational variables that are neither characteristics of the specific job/task nor related to the immediate supervisor. Rather, they reflect general practices that pervade entire groups, divisions, strategic business units, or organizations. An example is Jaworski, Stathakopoulos, and Krishnan's (1993) notion of professional and cultural controls defined at the divisional level, which reflect the degree of interaction (and/or cooperation) and group identification, respectively. Other examples include degree of formalization (Michaels, Day, and Joachimsthaler 1987), centralization (Cummings, Jackson, and Olstrom 1989), and rule observation (Ramaswami, Agarwal, and Bhargava 1993). A notable point is that, at least conceptually, these variables (hereinafter referred to as *organizational practices*) are defined at a higher hierarchical level than job/task or supervisory variables. Using such organizational practices, researchers have probed their influence on boundary role stress processes. For example, in a sample of marketing boundary spanners, Ramaswami, Agarwal, and Bhargava (1993) find that codification (of jobs/tasks) is not related to RC, but is positively associated with RA. In contrast, rule observation (by management) is unrelated to RA but positively associated with RC. They (p. 189) note that rule observation may be "construed as being necessary for maintaining discipline and fairness ... [but] a strict enforcement [of rules] may be construed as a hindrance to deal[ing] with role stressors."

Likewise, Cummings, Jackson, and Olstrom (1989) find that higher levels of structure and formalization are related positively to RC and negatively to RA. This suggests that, when firms clearly define and document the roles and activities of employees and thereby reduce role ambiguity, they do so at the expense of increased conflicts. Such trade-offs due to contrasting effects on RA and RC have remained largely unexplored.

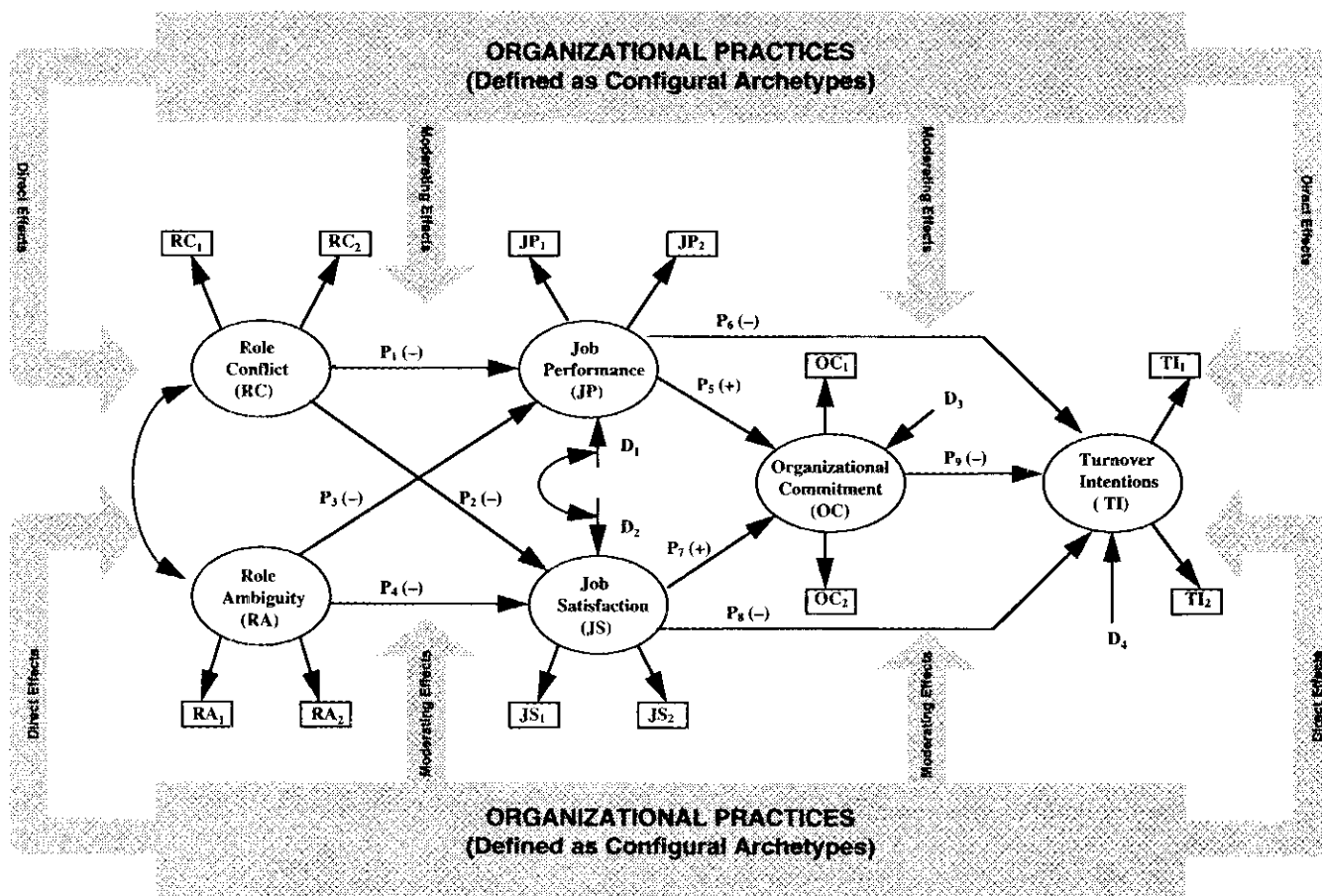
Finally, Jaworski, Stathakopoulos, and Krishnan (1993) examine combinations of organizational practices to develop a typology of control systems (e.g., bureaucratic/clan, high/low); in turn, these control systems are related to role stressors. They find that "high" control systems are associated with low RC and RA, whereas "bureaucratic" control systems are related to high RC but low RA. Because such contrasting insights are not possible when each control variable is used independently, Jaworski, Stathakopoulos, and Krishnan conclude that there is demonstrable evidence in favor of examining combinations or, more appropriately, configurations of organizational variables. Few studies have

adopted their recommendation for studying organizational variables.

Overall, the direct effect of organizational variables was weak. In Brown and Peterson's (1993) meta-analysis, the influence of supervisory behaviors and job/task variables on JS was .30 and .26, respectively, thus, accounting for less than 10% of explained variance. Hence, Brown and Peterson (p. 68) claim that their model excludes organizational variables and indicates "considerable robustness and generalizability ... across relationships and study contexts." Likewise, in a meta-analysis, Churchill and colleagues (1985, p. 109) find that organizational variables explain "only 1% of the variation in performance," and this influence was the "lowest ... among the six categories of predictors studied." These findings parallel results from Jackson and Schuler's (1985) meta-analysis in that organizational variables have significant, negative, but weak (< 15% shared variance), direct effects on role stress variables, with marginal direct effects on job outcomes.

FIGURE 1

The Model for Understanding the Direct and Moderating Effects of Organizational Practices on Boundary Role Stress Processes



Note: The basic model of interrelationships among role conflict, ambiguity, job performance, satisfaction, organizational commitment and turnover intentions is based on Brown and Peterson's (1991) metaanalysis. Organizational practices are operationalized as three distinct configurational archetypes. The direct effects involve the variation in mean values of the six constructs in the basic model across the three archetypes. The moderating effects constitute difference in the nine modeled relationships for different configurational archetypes.

The empirical view that organizational variables matter little in boundary role stress processes is at odds with the conceptual arguments of different role stress theories. For instance, Kahn and colleagues' (1964) role episode model posits that (1) people as role occupants perceive role stressors (e.g., RC, RA), (2) episodes that increase perceived levels of role stressors trigger a process that affects a person's behavioral (e.g., JP) and psychological (e.g., JS) outcomes, (3) the organizational environment serves as a context within which such role episodes are enacted, and (4) to the extent that organizational environments vary both within (e.g., group, department) and across firms, these contextual variables act as moderating factors in role stress processes. These theoretical principles appear to underlie the conventional wisdom in such expressions as "different individuals in similar roles may perceive different amounts of role stress," and "in different organizational environments, similar role demands may have different impact on individual's job outcomes." Other theories of role stress, such as Lazarus and Folkman's (1985) transactional theory and Edwards' (1992) cybernetic approach, also posit organizational variables as key determinants, though they differ in other important ways.

Critical Assessment and Gaps

A critical assessment of previous empirical research reveals three gaps: (1) choice of organizational variables, (2) level of analysis, and (3) moderating effects. We discuss each in turn.

Choice of organizational variables. Previous studies have tended to focus on a narrow range of organizational variables limited mainly to job/task and supervisory factors (Brown and Peterson 1993). These variables have two advantages: They are (1) rooted in sound theoretical frameworks (e.g., path-goal, Job Characteristic Model) and (2) proximal to boundary spanners' immediate task environment. Their disadvantages include an inability to tap the environment that pervades their group or division. To the extent that distal and proximal environments differ, an overemphasis on proximal variables may obscure the influence of organizational practices on boundary spanner stress and its consequences.

Using organizational practices to study role stress processes should be fruitful for other reasons as well. First, Poole (1985) has argued that practices are more visible to organizational members and play a key role in linking organizational environment and individual outcomes, because the practices are anchored in the behaviors of organizational members. Second, practices allow for specifying multiple attributes of the environment because the organization is conceptualized as a multidimensional practices construct (Hofstede et al. 1990). This multidimensionality facilitates a richer description of organizational environment. Third, behaviors and activities of organizational members reflect "theories-in-use" and, consequently, provide a common basis for describing the organizational environment. This aspect can be exploited to obtain consensual schemas of practices that are shared among several boundary spanners. Fourth, practices are amenable to managerial intervention. By focusing on behavioral practices, this approach helps isolate practices that

require behavioral modification so as to enhance the positive effects of organizational environment on boundary spanners. Although organizational practices have not received much attention in the marketing literature, researchers in organizational psychology have made significant advances in conceptualizing and developing this construct.

Collective versus individual level of analysis. Marketers have approached the study of organizational variables primarily from a decompositional, *individual-level* perspective. In this approach, the environment is decomposed into its relevant dimensions, which are defined at the individual-level and used as antecedent variables in a role stress model. For example, Singh (1993) uses three individual-level dimensions—autonomy, feedback, and consideration—to define the organizational environment and studied their effects on RA and job outcomes of boundary spanners. Few studies use a compositional, *collective-level* perspective wherein the environment is defined at a higher level (e.g., group or division) as combinations of its characteristics (Jaworski, Stathakopoulos, and Krishnan 1993).

A compositional approach uses multiple dimensions of organizational practices as input and seeks to uncover a few dominant combinations—termed *configural archetypes*—that represent shared interpretive schemas of organizational environments (Meyer, Tsui, and Hinings 1993; Miller 1987). This approach is based on the notion that though infinite combinations are theoretically plausible because individual practices dimensions could vary independently, only a fraction of the theoretically plausible combinations are empirically viable. This empirical restriction occurs because dimensions are interdependent and often can change only discretely. Hence, a configural archetype, or configuration, is a multidimensional constellation of relevant characteristics (e.g., practices) that empirically occur together (e.g., high result-orientation combined with open communications).²

Using a compositional approach to study organizational practices has several advantages (Meyer, Tsui, and Hinings 1993): First, it approaches organizational practices from a holistic stance because it characterizes the environment as a configuration of multiple practices dimensions. This contrasts sharply with the decompositional approach, which seeks to study the independent, separate effects of each practices dimension. Second, a compositional approach yields configurations that are not unique to an individual boundary spanner. Rather, each configuration represents a "schema" that is collectively shared by a group of people. Hence, configurations are more appropriate for organizational-level phenomenon than are individual dimensions. Third, few previous studies use a compositional approach to study organizational environments; therefore, in and of itself, identifying empirically viable configurations of organizational practices should yield an important contribution to

²Two procedures dominate for identifying the configural archetypes: (1) on a priori conceptual grounds, in which each archetype represents an "ideal" combination or (2) on post hoc empirical grounds using grouping techniques (e.g., cluster analysis), in which each archetype represents a "viable" combination (Doty and Glick 1994). In initial stages of research, the latter approach is more common (Dess, Newport, and Rasheed 1993).

the field. Fourth, and more important, a compositional approach enables the investigation of linear and equifinal effects as rival propositions. The linear postulate is consistent with much previous research in marketing and is based on the notion of “more is better” or “ideal-point” models. Specifically, it posits that, given any two organizational environments, (1) it is possible to identify a single configuration that is ideally more favorable than the other because it provides more of the underlying characteristics (e.g., communication, autonomy, feedback), and (2) a more favorable configuration would invariably be associated with lower levels of role stressors (e.g., RC, RA) and higher levels of positive job outcomes (e.g., JS, JP, OC) than the other configurations. In contrast, the equifinality proposition argues that it is highly unlikely that a specific configuration is significantly superior to other configurations across all dependent variables considered (e.g., role stressors and job outcomes). Rather, the more likely scenario is that two or more configurations are equally effective for some dependent variables (e.g., JP), or alternatively they are differentially effective (e.g., one configuration is associated with higher JS, but another engenders higher JP). In other words, an equifinal view denies the presumed superiority of any specific configuration. In this sense, the proposition of equifinality embodies the notion of nonlinear effects (i.e., “more is not always better”). Such equifinality notions are difficult to test in a decompositional approach.

Moderating effects. Marketers have been less interested in studying the moderating effects of organizational variables. Instead, the most frequently utilized approach is to test for direct (main) effects of organizational variables on role stressors and job outcomes (Cummings, Jackson, and Olstrom 1989; Fry et al. 1986; Singh 1993). For example, Singh (1993) hypothesizes that autonomy, feedback, and consideration have a direct negative effect on different facets of role ambiguity. Similarly, Ramaswami, Agarwal, and Bhargava (1993) examine the main effects of participation, formalization, variety, identity, and feedback on the role stressors, commitment, and alienation of marketing practitioners.

The hypotheses of direct effects stem from a situational perspective that draws heavily on social learning theories and behavioral psychology (Terborg 1981). Essentially, this perspective argues that a person’s response (i.e., behavior) is learned mainly through social situations, such that variability in responses is attributed to differences in situational characteristics (Terborg 1981). Hence, we see the main effects of organizational (situational) variables.

Nevertheless, an overemphasis on direct hypotheses is surprising, because a moderating or interactional perspective is central to such underlying theories as path-goal (House 1971), job characteristics (Hackman and Oldham 1976), and role episode (Kahn et al. 1964). Recent studies have attempted to address this gap by using organizational factors as moderators of the relationship between role stressors and job outcomes (Leigh, Lucas, and Woodman 1988). Yet, only a few moderators have been studied. For example, Michaels and Dixon (1994) test the moderating effect of work group cohesiveness on only two bivariate relationships, RA → OC and RC → OC.

Thus, it is apparent that a study examining the moderating effects of configural archetypes of organizational variables—such as practices—on the role stressors and job outcomes of boundary spanners is likely to fill critical gaps in the literature. It also is likely to be more fruitful if it eschews bivariate effects. In contrast, a multivariate analysis offers a more cogent test of the moderating hypothesis. Multivariate analysis involves testing for moderating effects on a set of relationships that capture boundary role stress processes described in Figure 1.

Research Objectives and Hypotheses

Specifically, three research objectives guide our study:

1. What are the distinct configural archetypes that capture boundary spanners’ shared interpretive schemas of organizational practices?
2. What, if any, are the effects of these configural archetypes on boundary spanners’ perceived (mean) levels of role stressors (i.e., RC and RA), psychological outcomes (i.e., OC and JS), and behavioral outcomes (i.e., TI and JS)?—which lead to the *direct* hypotheses.
3. What, if any, are the effects of configural archetypes on boundary spanners’ role stress processes—that is, the nomological relationship between perceived role stressors and psychological (i.e., OC and JS) and behavioral (i.e., TI and JP) outcomes?—which lead to the *moderating* hypotheses.

Configural analysis of organizational practices. The first aim utilizes the notion of configurations or combinations to study organizational practices. Configurations that are empirically grounded usually are derived by cluster analysis of relevant empirical data. However, to obtain relevant empirical data, it is critical to use dimensions of the practices construct that are reasonably reliable and valid. On the basis of definitions provided by Denison (1990), Poole (1985), and Hofstede and colleagues (1990), we conceptualize organizational practices as (1) systematic and customary activities and behaviors of organizational members that are (2) rewarded, supported, and expected by a subgroup and/or organization (i.e., unit).

Specifically, we use Hofstede and colleagues’ (1990) operationalization that specifies organizational practices as a five-dimensional construct.³ Each dimension represents a continuum describing a specific characteristic (e.g., process-results orientation). In Appendix A, we describe these dimensions along with a typical operational item. Using data from ten different Dutch and Danish firms, Hofstede and colleagues provide evidence for the validity of practices dimensions. As examples, units scoring high on the open communication dimension tended to employ significantly larger percentages of women employees, and the Danish units scored higher on the openness dimensions than the Dutch units. Likewise, larger units tended to be more professionally oriented, whereas smaller units scored

³Hofstede and colleagues (1990) report a sixth dimension, tight-loose control. Their notion of control is dramatically different from the control literature in marketing (cf. Anderson and Oliver 1987). Hence, this dimension was excluded.

lower on this dimension. Units with low scores for the job-employee continuum evaluated their employees on the basis of market standards (e.g., profit), whereas units with high scores tended to use internal standards (e.g., budgets). Also, manufacturing units tended to have low scores on results-process continuum, whereas research and development and service units tended to have high scores. In so far as the preceding evidence is consistent with logical expectations, the practices dimensions appear to possess face and ecological validity.

From a boundary spanner's perspective, organizational practices can be viewed as either inherently favorable or unfavorable. For example, employee-oriented practices are likely to be viewed by boundary spanners as generally favorable, whereas job-oriented practices are not (see Appendix A). Although individual preferences may vary, the five continuums of organizational practices defined here are such that the "high" end of the continuum is associated with inherently favorable evaluations, whereas the "low" end is generally unfavorable. Thus, practices that are "open," "professional," and "employee-," "process-," and "customer-oriented" are considered inherently favorable for the boundary spanner. Any given organization is likely to be a mix, or more appropriately, a configuration, of inherently favorable and unfavorable practices.

The direct hypotheses. The second objective investigates the direct effects of organizational practices on two role stressors—RC and RA—and four job outcomes—JS, JP, OC, and TI. Previous research in marketing is based solely on direct effects, because studies have tried to examine the direct influence of various "organizational" variables. We extend this research by testing the rival propositions of linear and equifinal effects. The linear proposition, consistent with much previous research, suggests that an inherently favorable archetype is likely to engender significantly lower role stressors and higher positive job outcomes than is an unfavorable configuration. The underlying rationale is based on the "more is better" dictum and drawn from JCM and path goal theory, as we previously noted. In other words, a configuration that has more of the inherent favorable features is likely to be associated with significantly lower levels of RC, RA, and TI and higher levels of JP, JS, and OC. In contrast, the postulate of equifinality is that these archetypes are equivalent in terms of some dependent variables (e.g., some role stressors and/or job outcomes have equivalent mean values across configurations) or, alternatively, are differentially equivalent (e.g., one archetype engenders lower RC or RA, while another results in higher JP or JS). The equifinal proposition has not been investigated in prior research studies. Because plausible configurations have not yet been identified empirically, it is difficult to posit more specific *a priori* hypotheses.

The moderating hypotheses. The third aim is to test two rival moderating propositions. The linear postulate argues that inherently favorable (unfavorable) archetypes likely result in uniformly alleviating (amplifying) effects

on boundary spanners' role stress processes. For example, we hypothesize that in inherently favorable archetypes, the negative effect of role stressors on positive job outcomes is buffered or reduced relative to unfavorable archetypes. Moreover, for favorable archetypes, the effect of positive job outcomes (e.g., JS) is amplified for other positive outcomes (e.g., OC) and buffered for other negative outcomes (e.g., TI) relative to unfavorable configurations. This is referred to as the buffering hypothesis (Pearlin et al. 1981).

An alternative, rival view is based on proponents of equifinality and argues that different configural archetypes may be equally potent in their buffering and/or amplifying capacity. That is, for example, the effect of role stressors on job outcomes is equally buffered or reduced in multiple archetypes. More plausibly, different archetypes may be differentially potent. For instance, it is plausible that an inherently favorable archetype may buffer the negative effect of role stressors on JS but have no significant alleviation of role stressors' effect on JP. Absent prior research on moderating hypothesis, we are unable to propose more specific *a priori* hypotheses.

Research Design and Method

To test the underlying research hypotheses, we needed the cooperation of a U.S. and Dutch multinational company (MNC). In each case, we focused on their subsidiary located in the Netherlands. Although these subsidiaries are not direct competitors, they do operate in similar industrial markets with products ranging from photocopying to medical (e.g., imaging) equipment. The choice of multiple MNCs within single-nation markets offers several advantages, including (1) variability in practices, because they represent the confluence of the MNC's and local (i.e., Dutch) cultural orientations, (2) across-firm variability within the same industry, and (3) control over confounding factors in cross-national studies.

We selected all marketing boundary spanners (i.e., customer service, salespeople) from both subsidiaries for participation in the study. In all, 170 personnel in the Dutch subsidiary (hereinafter Firm A) and 209 in the U.S. subsidiary (hereinafter Firm B) resulted in a target population of 379. Each participant received a questionnaire in Dutch, a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study, and an addressed envelope in which to return the survey directly to the researchers.

After two follow-ups, a total of 212 responses were received (response rate = 56%) of which 188 were usable (usable rate = 50%). Response rates were 59% in Firm A and 53% in Firm B, and this variability was nonsignificant. Respondents in Firms A and B did not differ significantly in their aggregate response to various measures of the study. Overall, 50% of the respondents were salespeople, and over 87% were male. The median age was 35 years (range = 23–60 years), and over 67% had at least the equivalent of a high school education. Sixty-nine percent were married, whereas approximately 22% were single. The median income was 40,000–60,000 guilders (about \$24,000–\$35,000).

Procedures

We developed a survey instrument using focus group data to modify available, frequently utilized measures of key constructs. We utilized reduced forms of some scales based on factor loadings and relevance to keep the survey within reasonable length. Initially, an English version of the questionnaire was formulated and later translated into Dutch through an iterative process of translation-back-translation-comparison. Two bilingual scholars independently translated the English version to Dutch, and back-translated the Dutch version to English. Comparison of the two English versions revealed areas for improvement. In addition, a marketing faculty from a major Dutch University was involved in all stages to ensure accurate and meaningful survey items. Finally, the Dutch version was pretested and modified.

Measurements

In Appendix B, we summarize the scales used to assess role stressors and job outcomes, as well as their measurement characteristics.

Organizational practices. We utilized a 20-item scale (after refinement) to measure organizational practices that were drawn from items developed and validated by Hofstede and colleagues (1990). Hofstede and colleagues provide abbreviated items to reflect central themes (scale materials are copyrighted). Based on these themes, we developed items suitable for focal boundary spanners.

A common factor analysis of the 20 practice items suggested five factors that were indicated by a relatively clear break in scree plot after the fifth eigenvalue. Together, these five factors explained approximately 53% of the total variance. The five factors were rotated to an oblique solution for clarity, resulting in an interpretable solution with items loading highly on their hypothesized, theoretically meaningful factors and relatively small cross-loadings. These factors are

1. closed-open oriented (four items, $\alpha = .68$),
2. parochial-professional oriented (five items, $\alpha = .62$),
3. job-employee oriented (six items, $\alpha = .78$),
4. results-process oriented (two items, $\alpha = .53$), and
5. internal-customer oriented (three items, $\alpha = .63$).

Clearly, some practice dimensions evidence less than desirable levels of reliability, which indicates that more developmental work is needed. However, these dimensions correspond to meaningful, interpretable factors and evidence significant reliable variance given the number of items per dimension.

Role stressors. Role conflict (RC) and role ambiguity (RA) were measured by three items, each of which was drawn from Rizzo, House, and Lintzman's (1970) work. All responses were obtained on a five-point strongly disagree-strongly agree scale. The alpha reliabilities were .74 and .71, respectively.

Job outcomes. The JS variable was operationalized as a six-item scale adapted from Ironson and colleagues' (1989)

study. It assesses boundary spanners' overall satisfaction with their jobs. This measure has been employed by several researchers in organizational psychology and has been found to have acceptable reliability and validity. The reliability of this scale was estimated as .81.

A self-rating, six-item measure of JS, which was drawn from Dubinsky and Mattson's (1979) study, was used. In this measure each boundary spanner was asked to evaluate him- or herself in comparison with coworkers on a five-point scale (ranging from bottom 10% to top 10%) on six different dimensions. This scale achieved acceptable reliability ($\alpha = .80$).

Organizational commitment (OC) was operationalized with a four-item version of a scale from Porter and colleagues' (1974) study. The scale achieved acceptable reliability ($\alpha = .65$). Finally, TI was assessed by a three-item measure based on Donnelly and Ivancevich's (1975) study. Responses were obtained from a five-point strongly agree-strongly disagree Likert scale of self-reported items concerning boundary spanners' thoughts about quitting the organization. This measure has been used often in previous research. Cronbach's α for this measure was .88.

Data Analysis

We designed a three-stage analytical strategy. First, we sought to uncover the distinct archetypes of organizational practices using a multistep cluster analysis procedure with the five dimensional composites of organizational practices as input. The data were randomly split into an analysis sample (100 cases) and validation sample (88 cases). We used the analysis sample to generate initial seeds from the Wards method and used the nonhierarchical K-means method to obtain configural archetypes. We further examined plausible solutions, using the validation sample to isolate a solution with maximum validity. The validity was based on the correspondence between a constrained (archetypes defined by the analysis sample) and an unconstrained (archetypes defined by the validation sample) solution. Once a validated structure of archetypes was obtained, the data were pooled for the next stage of the analytical strategy.

Second, we tested the direct hypothesis. The configural archetypes (step 1) served as the multicategory independent treatment variable. The dependent variables included the two role stressors (RC, RA) and four job outcomes (JS, JP, OC, and TI). Initially, we used MANOVA by including all dependent variables to test the direct hypothesis. If the null hypothesis of no differences was rejected, we conducted individual ANOVAs with each dependent variable. The overall Type-I error was controlled by the Scheffe comparison procedure.

Third, we tested the moderating hypothesis by analyzing the model of Figure 1 through Multiple Group Latent Variable Structural Equations modeling. This approach has several advantages. First, it enables us to simultaneously estimate the hypothesized model in each identified archetype. Second, it allows for "restricted" models that include systematic constraints on relationships among constructs. Thus, it is possible to test if one or more estimated coefficients are invariant across the configural archetypes. Third, the esti-

mated coefficients reflect relationships among underlying theoretical constructs and are adjusted for measurement error. Fourth, it provides a systematic basis for evaluating the fit of the hypothesized model to data. This is based on a χ^2 statistic, incremental fit indices (e.g., normed fit index, or NFI; comparative fit index, or CFI), and other indicators including Akaike's Information Criterion (AIC) and Average Offdiagonal Standardized Residual (AOSR) (Bentler 1990, 1992).

Due to multigroup procedures, we analyzed covariance matrices and utilized unstandardized coefficients for drawing substantive conclusions. The data were transformed using a procedure according to Joreskog (1971): (1) pool data across all configural archetypes, (2) standardize all measures for the pooled data ($\mu = 0, \sigma = 1$), and (3) recover data for each archetype for separate analysis.

Results

Configural Analysis of Organizational Practices

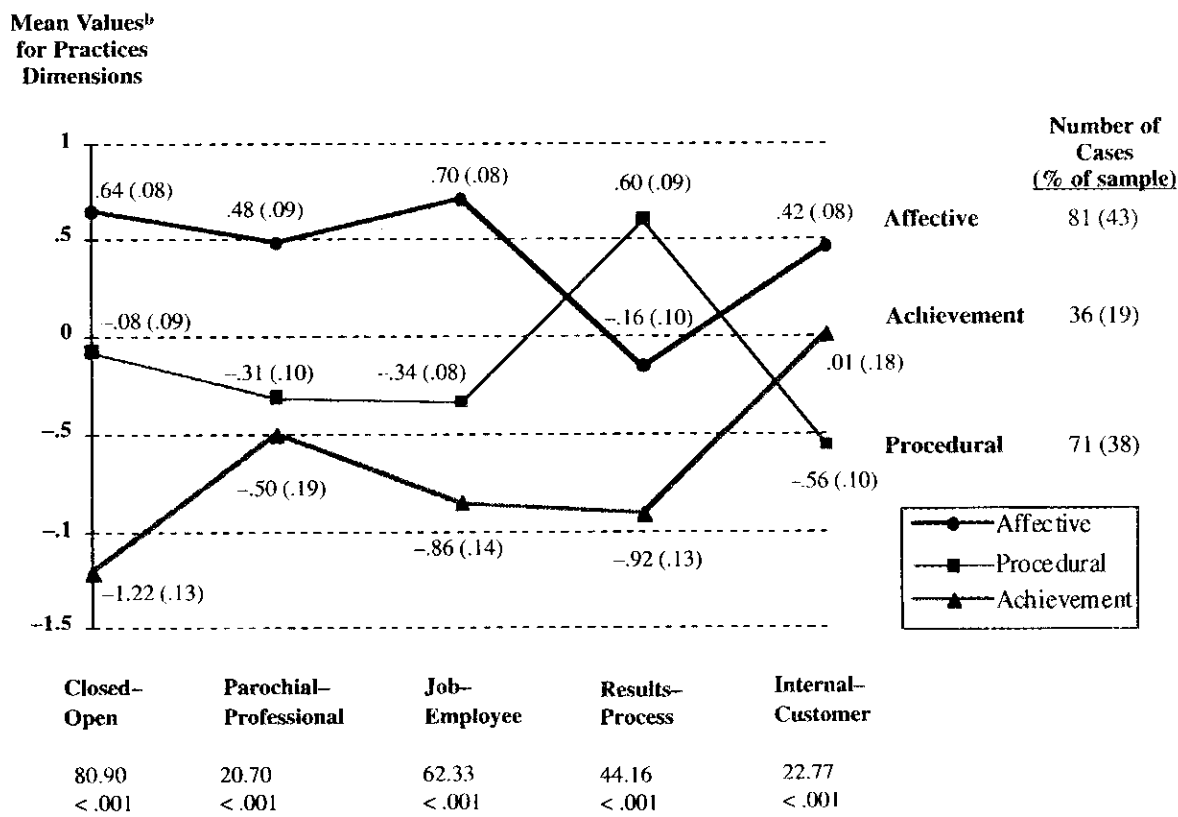
Hierarchical cluster analysis suggested two to six as the plausible range of meaningful clusters. Using the analysis sample to generate cluster seeds for each plausible solution, we fitted constrained and unconstrained nonhierarchical so-

lutions to the validation sample to isolate the solution with the highest validity coefficient, Kappa. The Kappas for two-, three-, four-, five-, and six-cluster solutions were .86, .93, .91, .85, and .72, respectively. The highest Kappa for the three-cluster solution suggested that these clusters were homogeneous and distinct from each other. A discriminant analysis with the three clusters as the dependent variable and practices dimensions as the independent variables yielded canonical correlations of .80 and .70, respectively, and a Wilks's Λ of .17 ($F = 49.7, p < .001$), which indicated that over 58% of the variance between clusters is accounted for. Thus, boundary spanners' evaluations of five practices dimensions yield a high degree of convergence and cohesion along three distinct, shared schemas (see Figure 2).

Figure 2 reveals that the three configural archetypes differ significantly along each dimension (F values $> 20, p < .001$) and, consistent with Ostroff (1993), are labeled as *procedural*, *affective*, and *achievement*.⁴ A procedural archetype differs from other configurations because it is per-

⁴Hereinafter, we use the subscripts *pr*, *aff*, and *ach* to refer to characteristics of procedural, affective, and achievement archetypes, respectively.

FIGURE 2
Configurations of Organizational Practices: Profiles and Summary Statistics



^aThe F-statistic tests the univariate hypothesis that, for a given dimension, the mean values are equal for each of the three configural archetypes. The associated degrees of freedom are 185.

^bThe numbers in the Graph are mean Z-values for each dimension evaluated at the centroid of each configural archetype. The corresponding standard errors are in parentheses.

ceived as highly focused on processes ($X_{pr} > X_{aff} > X_{ach}$) relative to outcomes ($X_{pr} = .60$, $F = 44.2$, $p < .001$) and least customer-oriented ($X_{pr} < X_{ach} < X_{aff}$; $F = 22.8$, $p < .001$). As such, a procedural environment is focused on internal (e.g., profitability, efficiency), rather than on external, market factors. Moreover, in contrast to an affective archetype, a procedural archetype reflects a moderate orientation toward open communication ($X_{pr} = -.08$) and is perceived as less professional ($X_{pr} = -.31$) and employee-oriented ($X_{pr} = -.34$). Because of its emphasis on internal processes, we refer to this archetype as a procedural orientation.

The affective archetype reflects an organizational environment that, in comparison to achievement and procedural archetypes, is characterized by high levels ($X_{aff} > X_{pr}$; $X_{aff} > X_{ach}$; $p < .001$) of open communication ($X_{aff} = .64$, $F = 80.9$, $p < .001$), professional attitude ($X_{aff} = .48$, $F = 20.7$, $p < .001$), employee focus ($X_{aff} = .70$, $F = 62.3$, $p < .001$), and customer orientation ($X_{aff} = .42$, $F = 22.8$, $p < .001$). For the process dimension, an affective archetype reflects a moderate orientation ($X_{aff} = -.16$). Because of its emphasis on open communication and concern for the customer and employee, we refer to this archetype as an affective orientation.

The achievement configuration represents the other extreme, as it depicts an environment that is least (i.e., $X_{ach} < X_{pr}$; $X_{ach} < X_{aff}$; $p < .001$) open ($X_{ach} = -1.22$), professional ($X_{ach} = -.50$), employee-oriented ($X_{ach} = -.86$), and process-focused ($X_{ach} = -.92$) but, at the same time, is moderately (i.e., $X_{aff} > X_{ach} > X_{pr}$; $p < .001$) customer-oriented ($X_{ach} = .01$). Because practices dimensions are continuums, this archetype also can be viewed as an environment that is highly focused on the job (instead of the employee), maintains a high level of results orientation (rather than process), operates within a less open communication system, and is somewhat parochial. Because of its emphasis on results and tasks, we label this archetype as an achievement orientation.

In Figure 2, we provide additional insights. In all, the procedural, affective, and achievement archetypes reflect shared schemas of 38%, 43%, and 19% of boundary spanners, respectively. As such, the procedural and affective are the more dominant archetypes. Nevertheless, an achieve-

ment archetype is a distinct configuration and reflects the shared perceptions of a significant number of boundary spanners. Finally, we conducted additional tests to examine if the three configural archetypes are influenced by (1) individual factors and (2) organizational unit or group factors. For the first hypothesis, we ran a MANOVA with archetypes as treatment variables and with several dependent variables: (1) age, (2) sex, (3) marital status, (4) nature of job (sales or service), (5) years of experience in the profession, (6) income, (7) years of experience in the present job, (8) education, and (9) firm membership (A or B). This produced Wilks's $\Lambda = .84$, $F = 1.67$, $df = 18$, 326 , $p = .04$, and an effect size of 8%, which indicates that the influence of individual factors is marginal. For the second hypothesis, we categorized each boundary spanner into eight groups, where each group is a formal unit headed by a manager, and ran a two-way analysis to examine the relationship between group affiliation and configural archetypes. This produced $\chi^2 = 36.2$, $df = 14$, $p < .001$, and a phi coefficient of .44, thereby suggesting that group factors have a strong influence on perceived archetypes.

Test of the Direct Hypotheses

We test two rival direct propositions—linearity and equifinality. Note that an affective environment has more of the favorable characteristics than other archetypes. Hence, the linear proposition is that an affective archetype engenders lower RC, RA, and TI, and higher JP, JS, and OC than do the procedural and achievement archetypes. The rival position of equifinality is that one or more archetypes may be equivalent for some role stressors and/or job outcomes.

Initially, we ran MANOVA with role stressors and job outcomes as dependent variables and configural archetypes as treatment variables. This produced a Wilks's Λ of .80 ($F = 3.36$, $p < .001$), thereby suggesting that mean values of role stressors and job outcomes vary significantly across the three archetypes. The canonical correlation is .40; therefore, the preceding differences are substantively meaningful. We next conducted specific tests for the linear and equifinal propositions.

TABLE 1
Mean Differences for Theoretical Constructs

	Configural Archetypes ^a			ANOVA Results ^b	
	Procedural	Affective	Achievement	F-Statistic	p-value
Job Outcomes					
Turnover Intentions	2.09	1.73	2.38	7.51	< .001
Organizational Commitment	3.68	3.85	3.61	2.19	.11
Job Performance	3.94	3.91	3.80	.83	.44
Job Satisfaction	3.79	4.10	3.85	5.97	.003
Role Stressors					
Role Conflict	2.67	2.31	2.79	7.25	< .001
Role Ambiguity	2.41	2.06	2.59	11.08	< .001

^aThe reported values are composite means computed separately for each configural group. Also, mean values in bold differ significantly from other mean values along the same row on the basis of the Scheffe multiple comparison procedure ($p = .05$).

^bThese are results from a one-way ANOVA with configural groups as the treatment variable.

The results offer mixed support for the linear postulate (see Table 1). The linear hypothesis is supported in regards to TI, JS, RC, and RA. This is because, compared to the procedural and achievement configurations, an affective archetype results in the lowest level of TI ($X_{\text{aff}} = 1.73$, $F = 7.51$, $p < .001$), and the highest level of JS ($X_{\text{aff}} = 4.10$, $F = 5.97$, $p < .01$). In addition, boundary spanners find that the affective archetype produces the least amount of RC ($X_{\text{aff}} = 2.31$, $F = 7.25$, $p < .001$) and RA ($X_{\text{aff}} = 2.06$, $F = 11.08$, $p < .001$).

In so far as commitment and performance are concerned, the three archetypes are equifinal ($F < 2.5$, $p > .1$). Thus, there are no significant differences across the three configurations on the commitment and performance of boundary spanners. Also, procedural and achievement archetypes are equifinal in regard to each role stressor and outcome examined ($F < 2$, $p > .05$).

Test of the Moderating Hypotheses

We estimated the role stress model of Figure 1 separately for each archetype through Multiple Group Latent Variable Structural Equations analysis. Several constrained models were estimated. These restrictions were *not* intended to re-specify the model to improve goodness of fit. Rather, they were intended to isolate differences in modeled relationships across the three archetypes.

Model fit analysis. The unconstrained model of Figure 1 yielded the following fit statistics: $\chi^2 = 180$, $df = 126$, $NFI = .93$, $CFI = .95$, $AIC = -71.5$, and $AOSR < .07$. Although the χ^2 statistic is significant, it is not necessarily an indicator of poor fit. This is because nonnormality and sample size are known to result in a biased χ^2 statistic that favors rejection of even models with good fit. In contrast, the various fit indices (e.g., NFI , CFI) provide a more unbiased indication of the goodness of fit. Because fit indices larger than .90 are usually suggestive of acceptable models, the unconstrained model appears to be a reasonable representation of data.

A constrained model that restricts all measurement parameters (i.e., factor loadings) as invariant across the three archetypes yielded fit statistics as follows: $\chi^2 = 202$, $df = 142$, $NFI = .92$, $CFI = .94$, $AIC = -81.4$, and $AOSR < .10$. Compared to the unconstrained model, the difference in χ^2 statistic is 22, with associated df of 16 ($p > .1$). Because this difference is nonsignificant, the constrained model is statistically equivalent to the unconstrained model. Due to its parsimony, as indicated by a lower AIC , the constrained measurement model was retained for further analysis.

Next, we constrained all structural parameters to be equal across the three archetypes. This model tests the moderating hypothesis. The fit statistics obtained for this model were as follows: $\chi^2 = 244$, $df = 165$, $NFI = .82$, $CFI = .93$, $AIC = -95.7$, and $AOSR > .10$. Compared to the unconstrained and constrained models, this model of no moderating effects yields a difference in the χ^2 statistic of 42 ($df = 23$, $p < .01$) and 64 ($df = 39$, $p < .01$), respectively, both of which are highly significant. This suggests that a no moderating effects model is rejected. Thus, as per the moderating hypothesis, the effects of role stressors on job outcomes vary significantly across the archetypes.

We tested additional models that constrained one or more structural parameters to be invariant across the three archetypes. Each constrained model was compared with the preceding models utilizing the χ^2 difference statistic. If this statistic was nonsignificant, the particular constraint was retained. This iterative process resulted in a final constrained model with the following fit statistics: $\chi^2 = 204$, $df = 152$, $NFI = .94$, $CFI = .95$, $AIC = -99.1$, and $AOSR < .10$. Compared to the constrained measurement model, this implies a difference in the χ^2 statistic of 2, with associated df of 10 ($p > .99$). Likewise, compared to the unconstrained model, the final model yields a difference in the χ^2 statistic of 24, with associated df of 26 ($p > .5$). Finally, compared to the fully constrained model, the final model yields a difference in the χ^2 statistic of 40, with associated df of 13 ($p < .001$). Although the final model is statistically equivalent to the constrained measurement and unconstrained models, it is significantly more parsimonious, as is evidenced by a lower value of AIC . In Tables 2 and 3, we summarize the relevant estimated parameters for the final model.

Estimated measurement parameters. Without exception, measurement parameters are substantively large and statistically significant (t-values from 7.2 to 33.1). For example, coefficients (i.e., loadings) for the two measures of RC are .68 ($t = 9.3$, $p < .001$) and .85 ($t = 14.2$, $p < .001$), respectively. Consistent with the significant factor loadings, the reliabilities of individual constructs range from .65 to .88. Finally, the indicators also show evidence of convergent and discriminant validity because they load only on their theoretical constructs, and cross-loadings are zero. Taken together, this is indicative of a well-specified measurement model, items that converge onto their a priori constructs, and constructs with significant systematic variance.

Estimated structural parameters. Unlike the measurement parameters, the estimated structural parameters depict an interesting pattern of differential relationships across the three archetypes (see Table 2). To provide a baseline for comparative analysis, we also include coefficients obtained from a no moderating effects model in the second column of Table 2. Thus, buffering (amplifying) effects will be substantiated if the negative (positive) effects are alleviated (enhanced) relative to the baseline coefficients. Moreover, we include a summary of total and indirect effects in Table 3. We discuss results for each dependent variable separately.

In terms of TI, six results are notable. First, the explanatory power of the role stress model is significantly higher for the procedural and achievement-oriented archetypes ($R^2 = .48$ and $.57$, respectively) than for an affective archetype ($R^2 = .23$). Second, relative to the baseline coefficient, the effect of JP on TI is buffered or reduced for affective and achievement configurations, but not so for the procedural archetype ($B = .35$). In other words, high performers have a higher propensity to leave when they believe they are operating in a procedural-oriented environment. Third, for the achievement archetype, though the direct effect of JP on TI is nonsignificant, note that in Table 3 this total effect is significant and negative ($B_{\text{tot}} = -.21$). Hence, high performers have a lower propensity to leave when they view their environment as achievement-orient-

TABLE 2
Estimated Coefficients for the Nomological Relationships in the Role Stress Model^a

	Configural Archetypes							
	Baseline ^b	Procedural		Affective		Achievement		
Dependent Variable: TI								
R ^{2c}		.48		.23		.57		
JP → TI	.18	.35	(2.50)	.12	(1.11)	.12	(1.11)	
OC → TI	-.35	-.01	(-.51)	-.01	(-.51)	-.79	(-3.39)	
JS → TI	-.49	-.71	(-5.90)	-.52	(-4.23)	-.52	(-4.23)	
Dependent Variable: JP								
R ^{2c}		.14		.38		.04		
RA → JP	-.39	-.23	(-2.32)	-.53	(-4.16)	-.23	(-2.34)	
RC → JP	.12	.12	(1.86)	.12	(1.86)	.12	(1.86)	
Dependent Variable: OC								
R ^{2c}		.75		.65		.52		
JP → OC	.07	.03	(.43)	.03	(.44)	.42	(2.42)	
JS → OC	.56	.56	(6.39)	.56	(6.39)	.56	(6.39)	
Dependent Variable: JS								
R ^{2c}		.70		.55		.49		
RA → JS	-.56	-.63	(-6.60)	-.51	(-5.32)	-.51	(-5.32)	
RC → JS	-.09	.01	(.01)	-.23	(-2.54)	.01	(.01)	

^aSome of the nomological relationships were constrained to be equal across the three configurations of organizational practices. Coefficients in italics are statistically significant and differ significantly across the three configurations. Coefficients in bold are statistically significant but invariant across the three configurations. We provide unstandardized coefficients with T-value in parentheses. T-values greater than 1.645 indicate significant effects at $p = .05$ for a one-tailed test.

^bThis is the unstandardized coefficient corresponding to the no moderating effects model, which was obtained by constraining the structural parameters to be equal across the three configural archetypes. Significant coefficients are in bold.

^cThis is the total variance explained in the referent dependent variable based on the hypothesized model.

TABLE 3
Total and Indirect Effects of Hypothesized Independent Constructs on Each Dependent Constructs^a

	Configural Archetypes							
	Baseline ^b	Procedural		Affective		Achievement		
		Total	Indirect	Total	Indirect	Total	Indirect	
Dependent Variable: TI								
JP → TI	.17	.35	.01	.12	0.0	-.21	-.33	
OC → TI	-.35	-.01	—	.01	—	-.79	0.0	
JS → TI	-.68	-.71	-.01	-.53	-.01	-.96	-.44	
RA → TI	.32	.37	.37	.20	.20	.53	.53	
RC → TI	.08	.04	.04	.14	.14	-.03	-.03	
Dependent Variable: JP								
RA → JP	-.39	-.23	—	-.53	—	-.23	—	
RC → JP	.12	.12	—	-.12	—	.12	—	
Dependent Variable: OC								
JP → OC	.06	.03	—	.03	—	.42	—	
JS → OC	.56	.56	—	.56	—	.56	—	
RA → OC	-.33	-.36	-.36	-.30	-.30	-.38	-.38	
RC → OC	-.04	.01	.01	-.13	-.13	.05	.05	
Dependent Variable: JS								
RA → JS	-.55	-.63	—	-.51	—	-.51	—	
RC → JS	-.09	.01	—	-.23	—	0.0	—	

^aEffects in bold are statistically significant. The numbers in the Table are unstandardized total and indirect effect coefficients are based on the final model unless otherwise noted.

^bThis is the unstandardized total effect coefficient corresponding to the no moderating effects model, which was obtained by constraining the structural parameters to be equal across the three configural archetypes. Significant coefficients are in bold.

ed. Fourth, relative to the baseline, the effect of OC on TI is buffered for the achievement archetype ($B = -.79$), but its buffering effect diminishes to nonsignificance for procedural and affective archetypes. Thus, in achievement archetypes, higher levels of OC drastically reduce boundary spanners' intentions to leave the firm. Fifth, JS has consistent, significant, and negative effect on TI, irrespective of the archetype, though this buffering effect is magnified for the procedural archetype ($B_{pr} = -.71$). Because JS also affects TI through its effect on OC, the total effect of JS on TI is considerable and significant (B_{tot} ranges from $-.53$ to $-.96$; see Table 3). Boundary spanners' satisfaction with the job is the single most critical determinant of TI, especially for procedural and achievement archetypes. Sixth, though the direct effect of RA on TI is negligible, its total effect is significant, consistent, and positive (B_{tot} ranges from $.20$ to $.53$; see Table 3). Thus, when RA increases, it indirectly motivates boundary spanners to quit, notably in procedural- and achievement-oriented environments.

For JP, three notable inferences can be drawn from Table 2. First, the explanatory power of the role stress model is significantly larger for the affective configuration ($R^2 = .38$) than for the procedural- ($R^2 = .14$) or achievement-oriented environment ($R^2 = .04$). Second, relative to the baseline, the effect of RA is buffered for procedural and achievement archetypes ($B = -.23$), but not for the affective environment ($B_{aff} = -.53$). Hence, boundary spanners appear to be more vulnerable to the dysfunctional effects of RA in an affective environment. This contradicts our hypothesis that an affective environment is more favorable for the boundary spanner. Third, though RC has a consistent, positive influence on JP, this effect is marginal and not moderated by archetypes ($B_{aff} = B_{pr} = B_{ach} = .12$).

For OC, four results are noteworthy. First, high levels of explained variance are achieved especially for procedural and affective archetypes ($R^2_{pr} = .75$, $R^2_{aff} = .65$, $R^2_{ach} = .52$). Second, the positive effect of JP is highly amplified for the achievement archetype ($B_{ach} = .42$, cf. $B_{baseline} = .07$). In other words, high performers are more committed when they perceive that they are operating in an achievement-oriented environment. Third, JS has a significant and positive effect on OC, but this effect is unmoderated by organizational archetype ($B_{aff} = B_{pr} = B_{ach} = .56$). Thus, boundary spanners' commitment to their organization (OC) is directly affected by their satisfaction with the job (JS), irrespective of the organizational archetype. Fourth, though the direct effect of RA is negligible, the results in Table 3 reveal that RA has a significant negative influence on OC because of its effect on JS and JP. Consequently, with increasing RA in boundary spanning roles, commitment is likely to deteriorate irrespective of the organizational environment.

Finally, the results for JS also depict an interesting pattern. First, the role stress model yields high levels of explained variance ($R^2_{pr} = .70$, $R^2_{aff} = .55$, $R^2_{ach} = .49$). Second, the negative influence of RA appears to be somewhat buffered in affective and achievement archetypes but not in the procedural archetype ($B_{pr} = -.63$, cf. $B_{baseline} = -.56$). Third, the negative effect of RC is significantly amplified for the affective configuration ($B_{aff} = -.23$, cf. $B_{baseline} = -.09$);

therefore, boundary spanners' JS is vulnerable to role stressors—notably in an affective environment. In less favorable environments, satisfaction is more susceptible to RA.

Discussion

Several limitations of our work must be noted. Our findings are based on samples of boundary spanners from two MNCs located in the Netherlands. Although these MNCs were selected carefully to provide variability in situational characteristics, additional samples are needed to examine the validity of our findings and uncover other archetypes, if any. The configural archetypes obtained here should not be construed as a definitive typology of organizational environments; the generalizability of obtained archetypes is as yet unknown. Although we used five practices dimensions that were drawn from a body of research at the focal location (cf. Hofstede et al. 1990), more dimensions can be explored to capture both the internal and external environment facing boundary spanners. As a related issue, some practices dimensions evidenced less than desirable reliability, thus indicating the need for further developmental work. In addition, it would be useful to examine the relationship between dimensions of practices and job characteristics or other climate variables. Also, all our measures are based on pencil-and-paper self-reports so that the strength of the relationships may be inflated by common method variance. It is unlikely, however, that common method variance would cause the differential pattern of relationships obtained across the three configural archetypes, because method variance usually works against differential validity. Furthermore, we followed a data collection procedure—respondent anonymity and surveys mailed directly to researchers—that is likely to yield less biased responses. We used a simple role stress model that was based on a recent meta-analysis in marketing. Several enhancements to this model are plausible, especially the inclusion of burnout and coping mechanisms. Finally, additional work is needed to evaluate the pros and cons of the compositional approach to studying the organizational environment relative to the decompositional approach.

Nevertheless, our study provides new insights into the influence of organizational practices in boundary role stress processes and on psychological and behavioral outcomes of boundary spanners. Unlike prior research, which tended to use the decompositional approach and found that this influence is marginal and weak, our study indicates that organizational practices matter significantly. The strong influence appears to have been obfuscated by three gaps in the literature: (1) exclusive focus on proximal variables that relate to boundary spanners' immediate task environment, (2) an individual- rather than collective-level definition of organizational variables, and (3) inattention to the moderating effects of organizational practices. Our study takes the first step toward filling these gaps. Before discussing the key contribution of our work, we note that it is inappropriate to frame our research as an "exploratory" study of organizational practices and boundary role stress processes. Instead, in the tradition of interactional approaches (Terborg 1981), the appropriate frame is that this study (1) explores the distinct

collective situations facing boundary spanners in two firms, (2) proposes alternative overall hypotheses about the role of these situations on boundary role stress processes, and (3) tests these hypotheses using a role stress model drawn from a recently published meta-analysis. Note that to be situationally sensitive necessitates careful exploration of the organizational environment facing boundary spanners; yet, the configural approach holds promise in revealing situational typologies that have more than local generalizability.

The Organizational Environment Typology

Our study yields evidence concerning an alternative approach for conceptualizing and operationalizing the organizational environment. The alternative compositional approach considers the organizational environment as a finite set of options caused by the interdependencies among the practices dimensions. The study findings indicate that this approach is viable and yields three configural archetypes that constitute a meaningful organizational typology.

Five reasons attest to the viability of the findings. First, the obtained archetypes relate to prior research in meaningful ways, as they appear to capture differences that account for procedural-, affective-, and achievement-orientations of organizational environments. Such orientations have a long tradition of research in organizational psychology (cf. Ostroff 1993). Second, these archetypes are neither based on ad hoc aggregation rules (e.g., group or organizational levels) nor defined at the individual level. Rather, they are based on consensus among boundary spanners and are derived by using empirical clustering techniques. Joyce and Slocum (1984) note that such collective characterizations of the organization are likely to be more valid. Third, our results show that the three archetypes obtained evidence a high level of internal homogeneity and external discrimination (over 58% of the variance is captured by the three archetypes). Fourth, the use of configural archetypes allows the test of linear and equifinal effects as rival propositions. Because some equifinal effects are supported, configural archetypes yield insights not heretofore available from previous research. Fifth, unlike prior research, organizational environments construed as archetypes have a significant impact on the role stressors-job outcomes relationships and appear promising in explaining both the magnitude and direction (+ and -) of such relationships. We have enough evidence to suggest that configural archetypes are a reasonable and promising approach for uncovering organizational typologies and warrant the serious attention of future researchers.⁵

The Direct Effects

The effects of the organizational environment on boundary spanners' attitudes and job outcomes are significant. Unlike

achievement and procedural archetypes, an affective situation engenders significantly lower RC, RA, and TI, and higher JS. These effects are consistent with previous studies showing that organizations that are employee- and customer-oriented and foster an open and professional environment are perceived as less stressful and more satisfying. For the highly process-driven procedural, and highly results-oriented achievement archetypes, the effects on boundary spanners' attitudes and outcomes are identical. Hence, the procedural- and achievement-oriented archetypes are equifinal in so far as the boundary spanners' role stressors and job outcomes are concerned.

Our results show that performance and commitment are invariant to all three archetypes. Thus, for JP and OC, all three archetypes are equifinal. Although we expected employees to perform adequately regardless of the situation (or be terminated), that the OC levels are identical across archetypes needs explanation. Although we can only speculate, previous research has shown that higher levels of OC are associated with supervisory behaviors that are perceived as supportive but are weakly related or unrelated to organizational variables such as job formalization and initiation of structure (Ramaswami, Agarwal, and Bhargava 1993). Apparently, more immediate or proximal factors such as supervisor support lead to stronger feelings of obligation or commitment to the organization than do higher level or distal factors, including organizational practices.

Overall, our results reaffirm conventional wisdom that some environments are inherently favorable for boundary spanners. When comparing direct effects, an affective archetype appears to be clearly preferable when the organizational goal is to increase JS and reduce TI. As moderating results show, however, the equifinality results defy simple explanations and argue against linear generalizations of conventional wisdom. Evidently, reality is more complex than what direct hypotheses can capture.

The Moderating Effects

We discuss two critical sets of results from moderating analysis: (1) the influence of role stressors on job outcomes and (2) interrelationships among the job outcomes.

Influence of role stressors. The findings reveal a disparate pattern of effects for RC and RA. For RC, most of the effects are insignificant. The single exception is the effect of RC on JS for the affective archetype, which is significant and dysfunctional. This accords well with Brown and Peterson's (1993) meta-analytical finding of this effect as -.29. Our study clarifies that this dysfunctional effect is more likely when the situation is inherently more favorable for the boundary spanner. In other cases, the effects of RC are buffered.

For RA, the effects are mostly significant and substantive. Essentially, compared to other environments, RA's effect on JS is significantly more dysfunctional for a procedural environment, and its effect on JP is considerably more dysfunctional for the affective archetype. Moreover, whereas the dysfunctional effect of RA on JP is buffered for the procedural and achievement archetypes, the net effect is

⁵It should be recognized that, as collective characteristics, configural archetypes represent consensus in perceptual, not objective, organizational environments. Although perceptions likely mediate the effect of (objective) organizational environments on boundary role stress processes (Joyce and Slocum 1984), it appears fruitful to explore the relationships between objective and perceptual features of organizational environments so that concrete suggestions for managerial intervention can be provided.

significant and negative (-.23). This is consistent with Brown and Peterson's (1993) meta-analytical finding of this effect as -.28. Likewise, the net effect of RA on JS is significant and negative (-.51) and parallels Brown and Peterson's results (-.33). Finally, for total effects (cf. Table 3), it is apparent that RA has significant, dysfunctional effects on OC and TI: The former effects are equifinal; the latter show a wide variability from .20 (affective) to .53 (achievement).

The overall picture that emerges from these results indicates three patterns. First, as far as boundary spanners' job attitudes and outcomes are concerned, it is clear that the effects of RA are more potent and pervasive than RC. Apparently, boundary spanners find it easier to cope with conflicting directions than with inherent uncertainty in their role.

Second, even in environments that are inherently favorable for boundary personnel, an affective archetype fails to significantly buffer the effect of role stressors; rather, its dysfunctional effects tend to be amplified. We interpret this finding in the context of the role-environment discrepancy. In affective environments, boundary spanners expect to encounter low levels of role stressors. Hence, relative to their expectations, even moderate levels of RC and RA are likely to appear discrepant to the boundary spanners, which results in greater dysfunctional impact. In other situations, boundary spanners expect the environment to be stressful, and the discrepancy between expectations and role perceptions is likely to be smaller. Although we do not have direct empirical evidence to corroborate this discrepancy explanation, the results in Table 1 appear to support this possibility, because boundary spanners report lower levels of role stressors for affective archetype.

Third, our findings reveal some evidence of the functional effects of role stressors. Consistent with some previous findings, our results show that, though the effects of role stressors are mostly dysfunctional, the effect of RC on JP is consistently positive and functional.⁶

Interrelationships among job outcomes. Because JS and JP are the key job outcomes that influence OC and TI, we focus on the effects of these outcomes. For JS, our results reveal that its effects are significantly positive for OC and negative for TI. Moreover, the former effects are uniform across the three archetypes, whereas the latter vary considerably from -.53 (affective) to -.96 (achievement) (see Table 3). It appears that JS helps build boundary spanners' commitment to the organization and, at the same time, diminishes their TI, which are notably potent for the procedural and achievement archetypes.

The most intriguing effects, however, involve JP. Three aspects are notable. First, JP plays little role in an affective-oriented organization, as none of the effects is significant. Thus, high or low performers are neither more committed nor less likely to leave an affective organization. Second, JP

has a significant and positive effect on TI in the procedural archetype: High performers are more likely to leave procedural environments. Third, in an achievement archetype, JP has a significant positive effect on OC and a negative effect on TI (see Table 3). Therefore, high performing boundary spanners appear to thrive in an achievement-oriented environment, thus resulting in higher OC and lower TI.

Together, our results present an interesting yet complex pattern of moderating effects. For the affective archetype, the pattern is consistent with prior research. High JS reduces TI. The effects of performance on other job outcomes are not significant; therefore, satisfied employees are less likely to leave. In addition, performance acts as a terminal value (no effects in accord with Brown and Peterson 1993). Presumably both high and low performers have lower TI when they perceive that organizational practices are open and employee-oriented. This accords well with Sheridan's (1992, p. 1052) observation that "strong and weak performers stayed much longer in the organizational culture emphasizing interpersonal relationships than in the work task culture.... [The] explanation of employee retention may simply be that an organization emphasizing interpersonal relationship values is uniformly more attractive to professionals than a culture emphasizing work task values."

The procedural and achievement archetypes yield a contrasting pattern of effects. In the procedural setting, high JP increases TI and is unrelated to OC. In an achievement archetype, high JP reduces TI and increases OC. Hence, JP has significant instrumental value in procedural and achievement archetypes, but its effects on TI are diametrically opposite. One plausible reason for this unexpected finding stems from path-goal theory. Presumably, an achievement archetype presents clear goals to boundary spanners (due to the results focus), and the links between rewards and goal attainment are transparent. The clarity of goals, supported by an unambiguous reward structure, is likely beneficial as it builds OC and retains the high performers. In other environments, the goals may be less clear and/or the rewards may not be tied directly to JP because they focus either on multiple goals or outcomes (e.g., affective) or pay little attention to outcomes (e.g., procedural) such that JP either has terminal value only or is instrumental in driving out high performers. This suggests that managers should resist efforts to focus too much on how things are done (e.g., processes) at the expense of what gets done (e.g., results). Instead, the strategy of choice may be to emphasize a few focused goals and consider rewards that are directly tied to performance.

Conclusions and Managerial Implications

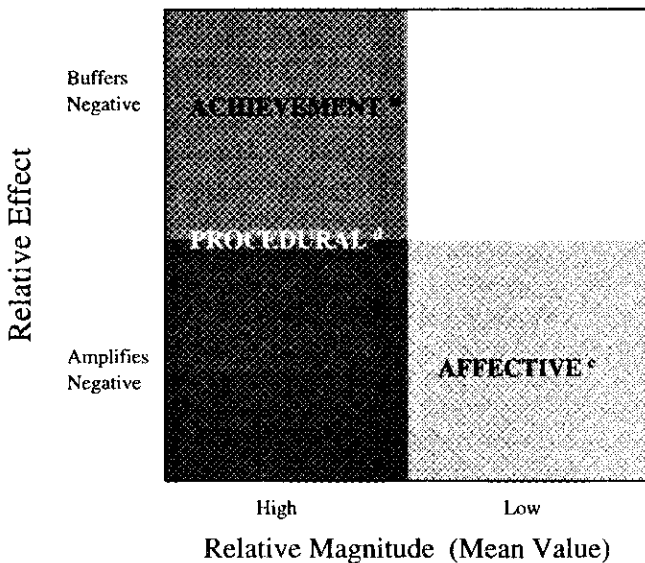
We establish that organizational practices matter in boundary role stress processes. Significantly, these influence patterns are not intuitively obvious, nor do they follow simple axioms of managerial practice. Instead, our results support an intricate pattern of nonlinear, equifinal, and counteracting effects. In Figure 3, we sum up the key findings. For clarity, we show a 2 × 2 table with columns as the relative magnitude or mean levels based on the direct hypotheses and rows as the relative effects based on the moderating hypotheses.

⁶Many reasons have been advanced to explain the functional effects of RC on JP. Behrman and Perreault (1984) suggest a rationale based on coping, whereas Singh and colleagues (1994) use an empowering argument, noting that moderate amounts of RC may provide an opportunity to exercise discretion. A reviewer suggested that this could also be due to some unmeasured, common antecedents.

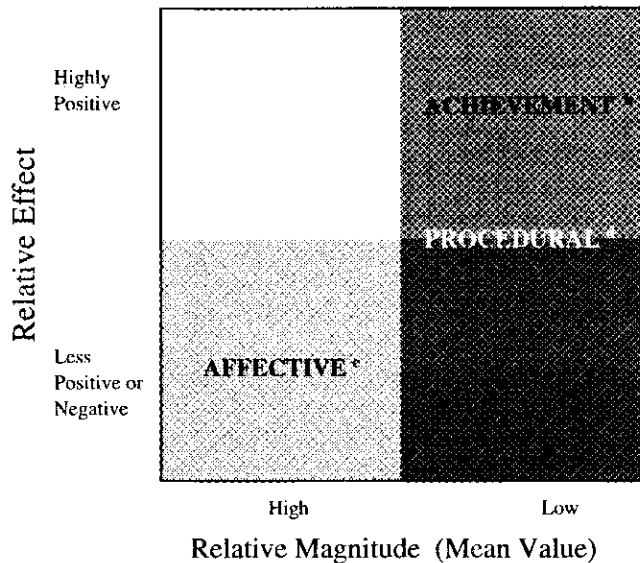
FIGURE 3

Summary of Key Findings from Direct and Moderating Effects Across the Three Configurational Archetypes^a

A. Effects of Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity on Job Satisfaction and Performance



B. Effects of Job Satisfaction and Job Performance on Organizational Commitment and Turnover Intentions



^aThe cells are shaded so that increasing darkness indicates decreasing functional effects for boundary spanners.

^bAn Achievement archetype is highly focused on the job (instead of the employee), maintains a high level of results orientation (instead of process), and operates with less open and somewhat parochial practices.

^cAn Affective archetype is characterized by high levels of open communication, professional attitude, employee focus, and customer orientation.

^dA Procedural archetype is highly focused on processes, is moderately open, and is relatively less professional and customer-oriented.

In Figure 3A, environments are categorized on the basis of whether the mean levels of RC and RA (magnitude) are high or low and whether the negative effects of RC and RA on JS and JP are substantially buffered or amplified (effects). For example, the affective archetype is categorized in the low magnitude–amplify negative cell because it is associated with low mean values of RC and RA (cf. Table 1), and the negative effect of RA on JS is strongly amplified relative to other archetypes. In Figure 3B, the three archetypes are categorized on the basis of whether the mean values of JP and JS (magnitude) are high or low and on whether the effects of JP and JS on OC and TI are highly positive or less positive to negative (effects).

Overall, Figure 3 suggests that organizational environments involve complex trade-offs between positive and negative consequences. For instance, though an affective situation results in lower levels of perceived role stressors (cf. Table 1), it comes with relatively high negative consequences for job outcomes. Evidently, organizational practices that are perceived as open, professional, employee-oriented, and customer-oriented tend to result in lower role stress, but the negative effect of role stressors on JP and JS is substantially amplified relative to other archetypes. Thus, the anticipated benefits of an affective environment (lower RC or RA) must be weighed against the possible decreases in JP and JS as a result of corresponding increases in role stress levels. In contrast, the results-focused achievement archetype is categorized as high magnitude–buffer negative because it is associated with high magnitudes of RC and RA and strongly buffered or diminished negative effects of RA

on JP (cf. Tables 1 and 2). Unfortunately this buffering effect is absent for other relationships involving RC and RA. Nevertheless, an achievement orientation requires trade-offs between employees exposed to high levels of RC and RA, but with lower dysfunctional effects on their current JP. The process-oriented procedural archetype is classified as high magnitude–amplify/buffer negative because, while it is associated with high levels of RC and RA, it involves one buffering (RA → JP) and one amplifying effect (RA → JS). Hence, this archetype straddles the two effects cells.

Figure 3B reveals that an affective archetype corresponds to high levels of JS and JP for boundary spanners (cf. Table 1); yet, these outcomes have relatively less positive effects on OC and TI. In fact, only JS is significantly associated with OC and TI (cf. Table 2). Hence, the affective archetype is categorized as high magnitude–less positive. A contrasting view is presented by the achievement archetype, which is associated with lower levels of JS but yields highly positive or functional effects of JP and JS on OC and TI (cf. Table 2) and therefore is low magnitude–highly positive. In this environment, JS levels are lower, but increases in JS and JP directly lead to more committed boundary personnel who are less likely to leave. Hence, an achievement orientation presents an intriguing alternative to an affective environment, as the latter is less stressful, more satisfying, and equally productive, but appears to lack the motivating spark (less challenging job—indicated by low levels of role stress) that underlies the functional effects visible in the former. Again, the procedural archetype falls in the middle of the effects cells because it involves one highly positive (JS → TI;

highly satisfied employees are more likely to stay) and one highly negative effect (JP → TI; high performers are less likely to stay). Moreover, the procedural archetype is associated with lower levels of JS. Thus, a procedural situation appears distinctively unattractive.

The overall view that emerges is that, though some environments are clearly dysfunctional (e.g., procedural), other configural archetypes may involve distinct trade-offs, because none is clearly superior. This view resonates with Weitz's (1981) belief that the search for "simple and sovereign" relationships that hold across a great variety of contexts is ill conceived. Furthermore, a comparison between the affective and achievement results suggest that it would be ill advised to target intervention programs that aim to purge jobs of RC and RA. Our results support Leigh, Lucas, and Woodman's (1988, p. 56) assertion that,

Role stress need not be construed as a failure of organizational communication or leadership (as suggested by Rizzo et al. 1970), but rather as vehicles the organization can use to provide its employees with the discretion to respond to a dynamic work environment. Organizations that attempt to purge conflict and ambiguity from the various positions may find jobs that are too limiting have been created.

We have enough evidence to suggest that future researchers studying role stress should avoid a myopic focus on individual processes and instead should focus simultaneously on individual- and organizational-level variables. We caution that our sampling of organizational environments is

limited by pragmatic considerations, and further research may uncover archetypes that fall into the empty cells of Figure 3. The search for archetypes that are associated with lower magnitudes of role stressors *and* relatively strong buffering effects, and/or high levels of JP or JS *and* relatively high positive effects remains an agenda for additional research. Our framework permits possibilities that yield unequivocal positive outcomes for the person and organization alike. We urge managers and researchers to seek and characterize such possibilities for the common good of the firm and its participants.

Nevertheless, our results suggest that the dynamics of the relationship between boundary role stressors and job outcomes are such that they require managers to grapple with complex trade-offs when considering appropriate practices of their organization. Organizational practices are important strategic choices that send powerful signals to employees and, consequently, must be based on critical analysis (e.g., goals, externalities, employee profile) and cautioned reason (e.g., pros and cons). More important, obvious choices of organizational practices based on the "more is better" dictum (e.g., employee-oriented, open) fail to grasp the underlying trade-offs. Our findings assert extreme caution at a time when the popular press appears to promote uncritical and exaggerated claims of faddish practices, such as "customer comes second" (Rosenbluth and Peters 1992) and "control from the bottom up" (Kelly 1994) in hopes of increasing boundary spanner performance and psychological well-being.

APPENDIX A

Key Dimensions of Organizational Practices Used in the Empirical Study

Dimension/Continuum	Conceptual Definition
Closed–Open	Open practices are characterized by an informal style of working, multiple and easy communication channels, and short socialization periods. In contrast, closed practices are reflected in a formal operational style, hierarchical communication channels, and long socialization periods. Typical item: "Where I work, people have an informal style of dealing with each other."
Parochial–Professional	Professional practices are defined by a high level of work ethic, seriousness of purpose in daily events, and a high level of trust and cooperation. Parochial practices are characterized by non-ability factors in recognition and reward, casual approach to daily events on the job, and personal preferences determining cooperation behaviors. Typical item: "People always speak seriously of the organization and job."
Job–Employee	Employee-oriented practices are defined by a high level of interest in employee development and personal concerns and problems of individual employees. In contrast, job-oriented practices involve a high level of focus on the jobs people perform and on problems and concerns involving job performance. Typical item: "The organization is only interested in the work that people do."
Results–Process	Process-oriented practices lay heavy emphasis on how things are accomplished within an organization. In contrast, results-oriented practices are characterized by a focus on the end-product. This parallels the means-end distinction. Typical item: "The company is more concerned with how we do things than that things get done."
Internal–Customer	Customer-oriented practices place the customer as the focal point of all their decisions and daily events. Internal-oriented practices place internal criteria—such as profitability and process efficiency—as the primary focal point for all decisions and daily events. Typical item: "The major emphasis is on meeting customer needs."

APPENDIX B
Scale Items Used for Various Measures of the Study

Role Stressors

- Role Conflict ($\bar{X} = 2.54$; $\hat{\sigma} = .75$; $\alpha = .74$)
 I receive an assignment without the manpower to complete it.
 I receive incompatible requests from two or more people.
 I work with two or more departments who operate quite differently.
- Role Ambiguity ($\bar{X} = 2.30$; $\hat{\sigma} = .66$; $\alpha = .71$)
 Clear planned goals/objectives exist for my job.^a
 I know exactly what is expected of me.^a
 I know how my performance is going to be evaluated.^a

Job Outcomes

- Job Satisfaction ($\bar{X} = 3.93$; $\hat{\sigma} = .57$; $\alpha = .81$)
 My job is very pleasant.
 My job is very worthwhile.
 My job is better than most.
 I sometimes feel my job is a waste of time.^a
 I am very content with my job.
 This job is worse than most.^a
- Job Performance ($\bar{X} = 3.90$; $\hat{\sigma} = .54$; $\alpha = .80$)
 How would you rate yourself in terms of the *quantity* of work (e.g., sales) you achieve?

- How do you rate yourself in terms of your *ability* to reach your goals?
 How do you rate yourself in terms of your *performance potential* among coworkers in your company?
 How do you rate yourself in terms of *quality* of your performance in regard to customer relations?
 How do you rate yourself in terms of *quality* of your performance in regard to management of time, planning ability, and management of expenses?
 How do you rate yourself in terms of *quality* of your performance in regard to knowledge of your products, company, competitors' products, and customer needs?

- Organizational Commitment ($\bar{X} = 3.74$; $\hat{\sigma} = .67$; $\alpha = .65$)
 I really care about the fate of this organization.
 I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond what normally is expected in order to help this organization be successful.
 This organization really inspires me to put forth my best effort.
- Turnover Intentions ($\bar{X} = 1.99$; $\hat{\sigma} = .91$; $\alpha = .88$)
 It is likely that I will actively look for a new job next year.
 I often think about quitting.
 I will probably look for a new job next year.

^aThis item was reverse scored.

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