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BETWEEN YOU AND ME: SETTING WORK-NONWORK BOUNDARIES IN THE CONTEXT OF WORKPLACE RELATIONSHIPS

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This study examined how individuals do "boundary work," the process of negotiating, setting, moving, and adjusting boundaries between work and life outside of work. In an inductive qualitative study of 70 attorneys in a large US law firm, I found that boundary work cannot be fully understood without considering the relationships within which it happens. Attorneys engaged in different types of boundary work in different types of relationships that activated either approach or avoidance motivation to pursue substantive (i.e., boundary-related) and relational goals. Boundary work led to measurable and predictable outcomes—success in boundary setting and impact on relationships—that depended on the nature of relationships and the type of boundary work used. I develop a theoretical model of boundary work and a set of propositions, and discuss theoretical and practical importance of examining boundary work in the context of interpersonal relationships.

In today's world of extreme jobs (Hewlett & Luce, 2006), extreme parenting (Jong, 2010), and fervent quests for "balance" (Trunk, 2007), understanding how individuals can effectively manage their work-nonwork interface is critically important. More individuals than ever are combining the two spheres of activities, as they share bread-winning and caregiving responsibilities in dual-career couples (Hernandez, 2005; Jacobs & Gerson, 2001) or combine work and nonwork responsibilities and interests as single people (Campbell & Koblenz, 1997; Hamilton, Gordon, & Whelan-Berry, 2006). Governmental and organizational supports are important and necessary to enable the management of our complex lives (Esping-Andersen, 2009; Gerson, 2010; Gornick & Meyers, 2005; Stone, 2007) but in the end, individuals are the ones facing the challenges of mounting expectations on all fronts. Individuals need to decide about their priorities, they need to complete their tasks, and they need to say no to excessive requests and even to some attractive opportunities. As organizations offer a wider variety of support programs to choose from and more workplace flexibility (Avery & Zabel, 2001; Galinsky, Bond, Sakai, Kim, & Guintoli, 2008), how individuals deal with perceived choices becomes particularly important to understand.

A social constructionist boundary theory (Nippert-Eng, 1996; Zerubavel, 1991) has proven to be a very useful theoretical lens for examining individuals' process of combining work and nonwork. This perspective focuses on boundary work, "the never-ending, hands-on, largely visible process through which boundaries are negotiated, placed, maintained, and transformed by individuals over time" (Nippert-Eng, 1996: xiii). Researchers using this lens see individuals as segmenting (i.e., keeping separate) or integrating (i.e., merging together) work and nonwork domains. In empirical studies thus far, researchers have considered preferences along the segmentation-integration continuum at the individual level (Judge & Watanabe, 1994; Kossek, Lautsch, & Eaton, 2005; Kreiner, 2006; Kreiner, Hollensbe, & Sheep, 2009; Rothbard, Phillips, & Dumas,

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2005) and at the organizational level (Kreiner, 2006; Rothbard et al., 2005). In short, the spirit of the boundary work literature is well captured by Kossek et al.'s statement that people's boundary-work strategies are "partly shaped as a result of the *structure* of the job they are in and partly by *individual differences*" (2005: 243; emphasis added). The interpersonal level of analysis, however, is currently underexplored in boundary work literature.

While several researchers have noted the fact that boundary work happens in *interactions* with bosses and spouses (Clark, 2000; Kreiner et al., 2009; Nippert-Eng, 1996), coworkers (Kossek, Noe, & DeMarr, 1999), and clients (Kreiner et al., 2009), these interactions have been considered in isolation and not as parts of ongoing relationships (Hinde, 1997). That is, while these researchers have recognized the impact of other individuals on boundary work in a particular moment, they have largely missed how boundary work is affected by the *nature of the connection*—in other words, by the previous and anticipated future interactions with those individuals.

Workplace relationships—the ongoing connections between people in a workplace—importantly shape individuals' organizational lives. They are a source of influence (Sparrowe & Liden, 2005), social support (McGuire, 2007), and relational identification (Sluss & Ashforth, 2007); they shape who gets asked for help (Casciaro & Lobo, 2008) and whose career blossoms (Briscoe & Kellogg, 2011; Burt, 2000; Thomas & Kram, 1988). Moreover, different rules govern different kinds of relationships. For example, benefits are divided according to need in communal relationships but according to merit in exchange relationships (Clark & Mills, 1993). The nature of relationships also shapes the process of negotiations (Gelfand, Major, Raver, Nishii, & O'Brien, 2006; McGinn & Keros, 2002; Valley, Neale, & Mannix, 1995), impacts costs of transactions (Uzzi, 1997), and affects willingness to help (Schein, 2009). Organizational life, in turn, affects workplace relationships. As individuals work together, meet each other's expectations, and exchange more information, their relationships grow deeper and stronger (Ballinger & Rockmann, 2010; Ferris, Liden, Munyon, Summers, Basik, & Buckley, 2009; Gabarro, 1978; Lewicki & Bunker, 1996).

This brief review brings into sharp focus the consequences of the current absence of relational considerations from boundary work research. Without taking relationships into account, scholars omit an important potential explanation of differences in individuals' approaches to boundary work; if relationships affect the giving and receiving of help (Casciaro & Lobo, 2008; Schein, 2009), ease coordination within negotiations (McGinn & Keros, 2002), and dictate the rules of interpersonal engagement (Clark & Mills, 1993), then they must affect boundary work, which entails all these aspects. In addition, ignoring relationships means neglecting an important consequence of boundary work: if relationships among people change and evolve through their working together (e.g., Ballinger & Rockmann, 2010), working through challenges of boundary work with others must affect relationships, which in turn affect a whole host of organizationally relevant phenomena discussed above. In sum, neglecting the relational context of boundary work limits ability to understand the boundary work process, its antecedents, and its consequences.

I designed this qualitative inductive study of attorneys in a large law firm to develop theory of boundary work. In this article, I focus on the integral role of relationships in boundary work and thus contribute to boundary theory in three ways. First, I show that boundary work cannot be fully understood without consideration of the relationships within which it happens. The nature of relationships affects how boundary work is done. Second, I use approach-avoidance motivation theory to explain how and why boundary work differs for different types of relationships. This enriches existing theory by illuminating the reasons for differences in and the motivation for boundary work, two topics that have been largely ignored in research so far. Third, I show that boundary work has measurable and predictable outcomes that depend on the nature of interpersonal relationships and on the type of boundary work employed. Outcomes include impact on relationships and thus extend beyond the previously examined substantive outcomes (i.e., the boundaries) in scope and duration.

Below, I review the literatures that helped me to frame my findings and connect them to existing knowledge in the field. The theoretical framing emerged from the analysis and did not a priori guide my study design or analysis of the data. I present it up front to enhance clarity and to guide the reader.

WORK-NONWORK BOUNDARY THEORY, RELATIONSHIPS, AND MOTIVATION

Boundary theory deals with the origins and characteristics of cultural boundaries, the socially constructed lines that delineate and define things from colors, genders, and countries to physical objects, domains, and roles (Lamont & Molnar, 2002; Nippert-Eng, 1996; Zerubavel, 1991). Boundaries are "physical, temporal, emotional, cognitive, and/or relational limits" (Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000: 474) that help people to distinguish one entity from another. The most critical structural aspects of boundaries are their placement and permeability (Nippert-Eng, 1996). Placement defines the size of the conceptual territory a boundary envelops (e.g., does "work" take 40 or 60 hours per week?) and the exact placement of the boundary along each of its points (e.g., is 6 p.m.–7 p.m. this Tuesday "work" time or "home" time?). Permeability is reflected in the ease or difficulty of mentally moving across the boundary (e.g., how easily do colleagues converse personally after a client meeting?) and is the function of similarity between the two entities (such as an individual's work domain and personal domain), and of the individual's practice with boundary work.

In work-nonwork research, boundary theory has been used to study the ways in which people create, maintain, and change boundaries between work and home (e.g., Kreiner et al., 2009; Nippert-Eng, 1996). The power of boundary theory for understanding this process is in its social constructionist perspective. Boundaries, and therefore entities defined by them, are socially constructed—actors come to shared definitions of reality through interactions (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). Initially, until they become taken for granted, such shared definitions need to be achieved through bargaining. Work-nonwork boundaries are a prime example: In order for individuals to place boundaries where they want them and thereby construct their work and nonwork domains, they need to negotiate with those who are also affected by the boundaries (Clark, 2000; Kreiner et al., 2009; Nippert-Eng, 1996), such as their colleagues, supervisors, clients, and spouses.

Work-nonwork boundary researchers noted the important role that individuals' family members, supervisors, subordinates, colleagues, and clients have in boundary work (Clark, 2000; Kreiner et al., 2009). Kreiner et al. (2009), for example, in their qualitative study of boundary work tactics of Episcopal priests, found that some of the priests' spouses were helpful in keeping overly demanding parishioners at bay. Some supervisors were noted as very supportive, too. One of the priests was pleasantly surprised to get the job of a rector at a new parish after leaving in the middle of the interview to attend to her sick child. On the other hand, researchers also found others to be a source of constraints, demands, and frustrations. Rectors and parishioners were pushing back on priests' boundaries, expressing disapproval, annoyance, and resentment; and priests were frustrated with those who, in their view, unnecessarily violated their desired boundaries and felt compelled to shift their boundaries in response to parishioners' justified pleas. Clark's conceptual work also underscored the important influence of "border keepers" such as bosses and spouses. She considered boundary work "an intersubjective activity in which several sets of actors . . . negotiate what constitutes the domains and where the borders between them lie" (2000: 761). Similarly, Perlow's (1998) examination of managers' boundary control over employees showed the critical role of interaction with others in boundary setting. Perlow focused on identifying ways in which managers pushed work-life boundaries in a direction that enlarged the work domain, while some (but not all) of the employees pushed back to protect the size of their home domains. Further, employees negotiated with their spouses, which in turn also affected how they negotiated with their managers. Depending on their responses to managerial boundary control, Perlow classified employees and their spouses as "acceptors" or "resisters."

These studies acknowledge the presence and influence of others but still cast boundary work as arelational. Researchers have been clear about the fact that individuals conduct boundary work in interactions with others but consider these interactions in isolation, not as being influenced by preceding interactions and by expectations of future ones—that is, not as parts of ongoing relationships that define appropriate rules of conduct (Hinde, 1997). By doing so, current literature decontextualizes boundary work in a way that limits ability to understand it as it is experienced by those who participate in it.

Interpersonal Relationships

Human beings have a pervasive drive to form and maintain lasting, positive, and significant interpersonal relationships (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Lawrence & Nohria, 2002; Reis, Collins, & Berscheid, 2000). To many, relationships matter most in life and give life its fullest purpose (Klinger, 1977). Relationships fulfill the human need to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) and help people to define themselves (Bateson, 1980). As "series of interactions between two people, involving interchanges over an extended period of time" (Hinde, 1997: 37), relationships are processes, not static entities (Duck, 1990; Hinde, 1997; Sias, Krone, & Jablin, 2002). They begin, develop, are maintained, and dissolve through communication (Hinde, 1997; Sigman, 1995). The interactions that constitute relationships are characterized by some degree of mutuality, so that each relationship partner takes the other's behavior into account—albeit not necessarily in a cooperative way (Hinde, 1997). Further, what strings a series of interactions into a relationship is a degree of continuity, in that interactions are affected by preceding interactions and by expectations of future events (Hinde, 1997). Interactions within a relationship are patterned; even though relationships are dynamic, they are characterized by a certain degree of stability and predictability because of the effects that previous interactions have on future ones (Sias et al., 2002). Work relationships develop from individuals' exploration (Teboul & Cole, 2005), sizing each another up (Sathe, 1985), and seeking to initiate relationships with similar others (Sias & Cahill, 1998) and/or those who could be beneficial (Teboul & Cole, 2005); through developing mutual expectations (Gabarro, 1987), shared understanding (Reis & Shaver, 1988), and building loyalty (Teboul & Cole, 2005); to a more stable phase, in which mutual expectations are well defined (Gabarro, 1987). Relationships can then develop further, stall in their development, or deteriorate (Teboul & Cole, 2005). In addition to this gradual development, relationships can change quite quickly and dramatically, as a result of departures from predictable behavior, the so-called anchoring events in which individuals are treated by others differently than expected (Ballinger & Rockmann, 2010). As a result of their development, relationships at any point in time vary along many dimensions, including degree of self-disclosure and related closeness and intimacy (Altman & Taylor, 1973; Gabarro, 1987; Laurenceau, Barrett, & Pietromonaco, 1998) and level of trust and distrust (Gabarro, 1987; Holmes, 1991; Lewicki & Bunker, 1995; Lewicki, McAllister, & Bies, 1998; Lount, Zhong, Sivanathan, & Murnighan, 2008).

To preserve relationships, individuals seek to follow the rules of relationships and to meet the expectations of their relationship partners (Argyle & Henderson, 1984; Clark & Mills, 1979; Fiske, 1992, 2004; Henderson & Argyle, 1986). These rules and expectations differ among relationships. Some researchers argue that these differences are fundamental and categorical (Bugental, 2000; Fiske, 1991; Mills & Clark, 1982); others believe that they are better represented by continuous dimensions (Waller & Meehl, 1998), such as cooperative/friendly versus competitive/hostile, equal versus unequal, intense versus superficial, and socioemotional/informal versus task-oriented/formal (Wish, Deutsch, & Kaplan, 1976). Such differences among relationships affect many aspects of individuals' experiences in organizations, from getting help (Casciaro & Lobo, 2008; Schein, 2009), finding interesting work, and securing others' cooperation to complete work (Lazega, 2001) to achieving professional goals and career success (Briscoe & Kellogg, 2011; Burt, 2000; Lazega, 2001; Thomas & Kram, 1988).

It is striking that relationships have not received more attention in the study of work-nonwork boundaries. Boundary theory has been extensively and effectively used to help people navigate and understand relationships (Katherine, 1993, 2000; Whitfield, 2010), and setting work-nonwork boundaries—at least in some respect—overlaps with setting relational boundaries. For example, saying no to a boss's request to come to work on a weekend can be viewed as setting a boundary between work and nonwork but also as setting a boundary in the relationship with the boss by confirming or limiting compliance. I suggest that boundary work differs with the nature of the relationship within which it takes place, because the motivation underlying boundary work takes different shapes in different types of relationships.

Approach-Avoidance Motivation

The theory of approach and avoidance motivation (Elliot, 1999; Elliot & Covington, 2001), according to which people's behavior follows the hedonic principle of pursuing pleasure and avoiding pain (Freud, 1950), helps to capture these differences. The general distinction between avoidance and approach has roots among the ancient Greek philosophers, and the fathers of psychology as a discipline, such as James, Freud, Skinner, Lewin, and Maslow, all embraced it. Many consider Miller and Dollard (1941) to have introduced approach and avoidance as the building blocks of human behavior. Their perspective has received wide recognition, and it has recently been argued that approach and avoidance are fundamental to the nature of human personality (Carver, Sutton, & Scheier, 2000; Zuckerman, 2005).

To better understand human motivation, Higgins (1997) proposed moving beyond the mere hedonic idea of approaching pleasure and avoiding pain to try to understand the principles that underlie its operation. Two such self-regulatory principles that he identified are regulatory focus and regulatory anticipation. Each principle can have an approach or an avoidance orientation. With *approach orientation*, individuals are primarily concerned with the presence and absence of positive outcomes (Higgins & Spiegel, 2007); they are motivated to attain gains and improvement (exhibiting a "promotion regulatory focus") and approach anticipated pleasure (exhibiting approach regulatory anticipation) (Higgins, 1997). With *avoidance orientation*, individuals are concerned with the absence and presence of negative outcomes (Higgins & Spiegel, 2007); they try to prevent loss and maintain satisfaction (exhibiting prevention regulatory focus) and avoid anticipated pain (exhibiting avoidance regulatory anticipation) (Higgins, 1997). In boundary work, approach motivation would be reflected in a focus on getting desired time off from work and the expectation of being able to do so, whereas avoidance motivation would be reflected in a focus on preventing undesired boundary violations and expecting such violations to occur. Higgins (1997) saw individuals as having general tendencies toward approach or avoidance but noted that each individual's motivation can change from situation to situation. Similarly, Elliot (2006) and Gable (2006) saw individuals' behavior as influenced by dispositional differences but also by environmental factors and short-term goals.

Motivation for boundary work has received little attention in the literature. Those who have explored *why* individuals set boundaries have suggested that they do so to define things, as a means to perceive them and give them meaning (Zerubavel, 1991), and that boundaries in the mind are likely to have both genetic and social foundations (Hartmann, 1991). Yet boundary theory in work-life research deals less with conceptual definitions and more with setting concrete boundaries between work and nonwork. For example, the boundary work that is the focus here is not about whether or not responding to work e-mail during a family outing constitutes work; it is about whether an individual responds to work e-mail during the outing or attends to it only once the outing is over. When it comes to this concrete boundary work, boundary theory has little to say about why different people do it differently. While several researchers have examined differences in boundary setting, from preferences for segmentation or integration (Nippert-Eng, 1996; Rothbard et al., 2005) to resisting or accepting others' demands (Perlow, 1998), the reasons for these and other differences in approaches to boundary work have not been explored. Kreiner and colleagues (2009) also did not focus on motivation for boundary work, although they implicitly suggested that individuals are motivated to set *desired* boundaries—that is, to set boundaries that bring them closer to their ideal state of the division of time, space, energy, and attention between work and life outside of work, and to move away from boundary violations (situations in which situational variables prevent them from enacting desired boundaries).

I suggest that individuals experience approach and avoidance motivation in boundary work. Moreover, they experience approach and avoidance motivation not only as it relates to their boundaries—trying to come as close as possible to their desired boundaries and avoid undesired boundaries—but also as it relates to their relationships. Individuals are sometimes primarily motivated by pursuing positive relational outcomes and other times by avoiding negative relational outcomes.

This study moves toward a boundary theory that would explain the mutual effects of boundary work, relationships, and motivation. It addresses three research questions: (1) How does relational context affect boundary work? (2) How do relationships shape the outcomes of boundary work? and (3) How does boundary work affect relationships?

METHOD

My exploration of boundary work is grounded in a qualitative study of attorneys at Mack & Clark (a pseudonym), a large US law firm. The purpose of this study was to develop theory about the process of boundary work and to identify effective approaches to it. The study was therefore designed to be open-ended and to allow unexpected themes to emerge. My focus on relationships is a result of an inductive process and stems from the prevalence of this theme in the interviews, not from a deductive, a priori logic.

A qualitative, inductive approach was a good fit for this study, because my goal was to understand a *process* (Edmondson & McManus, 2007) and to uncover new *types* of phenomena (Siggelkow, 2007). Attorneys were a suitable group to study because, as professionals, they enjoy a significant amount of autonomy regarding when, where, and how they work; thus, I could expect to encounter a range of approaches to boundary work. Because of the high number of hours they spend at work, they are also likely to frequently encounter situations in which their work and nonwork demands come into conflict, so that active boundary work is required.

Research Context and Data

To understand the subjective experience of boundary work, I conducted in-depth interviews with 70 attorneys at Mack & Clark and analyzed them using a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Langley, 1999; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). To identify participants, I sent an e-mail about the research project to all 361 attorneys in the litigation and corporate practices of Mack & Clark's two offices, to which an academic and consultant helped me arrange access through his contacts with the firm's management. I asked them to participate in "research exploring how attorneys manage the demands of work and life outside of work." In response, 130 attorneys (36%) volunteered to participate. From this pool of volunteers, I chose participants using theoretical sampling to get variance along the dimensions that seemed important for work-nonwork issues a priori (sex, parenthood, work arrangement) or emerged as important from the early interviews (seniority, practice area), to capture the variability in attorneys' circumstances and approaches to managing the competing demands of work and nonwork, until I reached theoretical saturation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Interviewees occupied all levels of seniority (32 were junior associates; 17, senior associates; 3, of counsel;[1] 18, partners) and worked in litigation ($n = 43$) and corporate ($n = 27$) practices. The sample was balanced in gender, and 38 interviewees—19 men and 19 women—had children. Nine attorneys had a reduced workload arrangement.

In the interviews, attorneys reported to have volunteered for a variety of reasons: because they were really struggling with their own work-life issues; because they felt they had good advice to share; or because they felt that work-life issues were blown out of proportion. This alleviated my concern that respondents would be mostly those who faced particularly difficult challenges balancing their own work and nonwork lives.

The interviews were semistructured, with three main themes: (1) a description of responsibilities at work and outside of work, including hours billed, family arrangements, and a general assessment of how easy or difficult balancing work and nonwork activities was for respondents; (2) one or more recent examples of conflicting work and nonwork demands and their responses (i.e., boundary work); and (3) a general discussion of the habits, rules, and principles that characterized respondents' decisions and practices concerning management of work and nonwork demands, as well as the consequences they experienced. The full interview protocol is in the Appendix. I conducted most interviews in attorneys' offices.[2] The interviews were from 30 to 110 minutes long and averaged 73 minutes; only three interviews lasted less than an hour. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim, yielding almost 2,000 pages of transcripts.

Attorneys described 176 boundary episodes, that is, specific instantiations of conflicting work and nonwork demands and their responses. I focused my analysis first on each of these episodes. Such a short-term, episode-as-a-unit-of-analysis approach allowed me to explore boundary work in great depth and detail. Attorneys also provided 319 more general descriptions of ways in which they managed their competing demands. I used this information to better understand the context within which decisions were made and actions taken and to glean deeper insight into individuals' "sense making" about and experiences with boundary work.

Analysis

Using a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to analyze my data, I first conducted several rounds of open coding. The interpersonal nature of the experiences surrounding boundary work emerged from this process as a strong theme. Moreover, attorneys talked about not just interactions but relationships, the *ongoing* connections among people. Four notions emerged as important in the early stages: (a) attorneys attended to and used their relationships with others at work when they conducted boundary work, (b) attorneys used a wide variety of approaches to boundary work, (c) boundary work impacted not only work-nonwork boundaries but also interpersonal relationships, and (d) attorneys anticipated the need for boundary work and prepared for it in advance.

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[1] All "of counsel" attorneys in this sample were not interested in becoming partners yet agreed to stay with their firms indefinitely.

[2] One interview took place in a restaurant, and 13 interviews were conducted over the phone. No systematic differences in the quality of data or in the substance of interviews conducted in different ways were detected.

I continued coding to refine my understanding of each of these ideas, conducting several rounds of axial coding (relating categories to one another) and selective coding (integrating the concepts around the core category of boundary work) (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). To develop a deep understanding of the boundary work process, I focused on relationships as sources of support (in some rounds) and on constraints that relationships imposed (in others). I repeatedly switched between analyzing my data and studying the literature to ground the emerging constructs and identify possible contributions. For example, as I tried to characterize the nature of attorneys' interpersonal relationships, I examined several existing categorizations of relationships (Fiske, 1991; Mills & Clark, 1982), returned to the data to examine if they fit these preexisting categories, and realized that they did not. Additional coding helped me pinpoint the meaningful differences between the relationships that attorneys described, and another review of the literature revealed how these mapped onto previously identified characteristics of interpersonal relationships, such as closeness and trust (Duck, 2007b; Hinde, 1997; Lewicki & Bunker, 1995).

I used ATLAS.ti 6.2 to enter the codes, describe them, facilitate the coding process, write memos, perform text searches, examine the relationships between codes, and track frequencies and co-occurrences of codes during the analysis. I also organized the evidence and made sense of it using the guidelines of Miles and Huberman (1994). I created tables of quotes and compared them along a variety of dimensions to determine the characteristics of boundary work processes in different kinds of relationships and the outcomes to which different approaches led.

In the end, I focused my coding on three sets of constructs: (1) types of boundary work, (2) the nature of relationships between "boundary setters" and "boundary violators" (the counterparts of boundary setters in the boundary work process),[3] and (3) outcomes of boundary work. As different parts of the coding scheme crystallized, I engaged research assistants to independently code the data to alleviate the potential for bias. In several meetings, we compared our coding for boundary work types and the nature of relationships; we further clarified the categories, and discussed and resolved differences in the coding that we each completed independently (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This process does not allow for a traditional assessment of interrater reliability but is used often in inductive qualitative research (e.g., Anteby, 2010; Kreiner et al., 2009; Nag, Corley, & Gioia, 2007; Richardson, Meade, Rosbruch, Vescio, Price, & Cordero, 2009) and is consistent with the inductive method (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). For coding of the outcomes, a research assistant completed a full round of independent coding based on my coding scheme. Interrater agreement was high. The research assistant and I resolved the examples in which our coding differed, and the reported results are based on the reconciled coding.

Coding types of boundary work. To code the ways in which individuals went about their boundary work, I started with in vivo codes, using the words that interviewees used to describe their boundary work tactics. I then examined these tactics for commonalities and differences to organize them into groupings. After multiple iterations, it became clear that the examples of boundary work provided in the interviews differed along two basic dimensions: the goal of the boundary work and approach-avoidance motivation (Elliot, 2008; Gable, 2006), which led attorneys to either include their relationship partners in boundary work or exclude them from it. The resulting six types of boundary work are graphically represented in Figure 1.

The nature of relationships. Four mutually exclusive relationship types emerged from the data: "close," "established," "new," and "leery" relationships. They differed in closeness and intimacy (Duck, 2007a; Hinde, 1997), the level of trust and distrust between the relationship partners (Lewicki et al., 1998), and duration. Given that I did not ask my interviewees about relationships at all, I was

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[3] I refer to a person or persons (e.g., supervisor, subordinate, peer, or client) with whom interviewees (boundary setters) were interacting when setting their boundaries as boundary violators to reflect the fact that they were engaging in "boundary violations" (Kreiner et al., 2009) by breaching or neglecting boundary setters' desired work-nonwork boundaries. It is important to note that, despite the aggressive undertone of the term, boundary violators sometimes violated others' boundaries unintentionally and might have even set certain work demands on boundary setters at a time when they did not at all yet conflict with nonwork activities.

FIGURE 1
Types of Boundary Work

Goal Motivation	Boundary Setting	Impression Management	Self-management
Approach			
Avoidance			

able to code only a subset (76 descriptions and examples) for the nature of relationship.[4]

Outcomes. I coded each boundary episode and general description for the two relevant outcomes. First, I coded for "success in boundary setting" ("complete success," "partial success," "no success," "unknown success"[5]). To determine the degree of success, I compared boundary setters' desired boundaries with the actual boundaries they were able to set. For example, imagine that an associate wanted a work-free weekend to spend with out-of-town friends, but the rest of her team was working. If she was consequently able to take the entire weekend off, I coded the example as "complete success." If she had to participate in an hour-long conference call on Sunday afternoon but was free the rest of that time, I coded that as "partial success." If she was required to be available to work (as though her friends were not visiting), I coded that as "no success." Second, I coded for "impact on relationship" to capture whether boundary work improved the relationship between a boundary setter and boundary violator, damaged it, had a neutral effect on it, or had an unknown effect on it. I coded for immediate (not long-term) impact on relationships, and only if enough information was available to reach a reliable conclusion about such impact. I coded for both outcomes as perceived and reported by interviewees—the boundary setters—comparing each actual boundary outcome with interviewees' original desires and coding for negative impact on a relationship if interviewees resented the other person, as well as if they perceived the other as having negative feelings toward them, immediately after boundary work. In this way, I stayed true to my intent to understand attorneys' subjective experiences, a goal for which an in-depth interview is an appropriate data collection method (Barley & Kunda, 2001).

BOUNDARY WORK WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF WORKPLACE RELATIONSHIPS

My findings demonstrate the critical role that interpersonal relationships play in the process of boundary work. The nature of the relationship between boundary setter and boundary violator virtually predefined the set of options available to boundary setters. In other words, the type of boundary work boundary setters engaged in was contingent upon the nature of their interpersonal relationship with the other party. Types of boundary work, in turn, affected the outcomes of boundary work—success in boundary setting and impact on relationships. Moreover, the effectiveness of the same types of boundary work varied with the nature of the relationships in which they took place.

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[4] Because of the inductive nature of the project, many descriptions of boundary work did not include all the information in which I ended up being interested. Many general descriptions did not allow me to code for outcomes. Many descriptions of boundary work did not contain enough information to code for the nature of relationships. To compensate for the "missing data," I tried to check that emerging patterns were confirmed in more than one way. For example, to confirm that patterns in outcomes of boundary work among relationship types, for which I had little data, were not spurious, I also analyzed the patterns among types of boundary work, about which I had more data.

[5] A few examples had not yet been resolved at the time of the interview, so the level of success was not yet clear.

Overall, the nature of attorneys' relationships determined the trade-offs between success in boundary setting and impact on relationships. The overview of findings is depicted in Figure 2. The embeddedness of boundary work in relationships, its contingency on those relationships, and the trade-offs between two outcomes all suggest that studies of boundary work need to incorporate relationships in order to fully investigate the phenomenon.

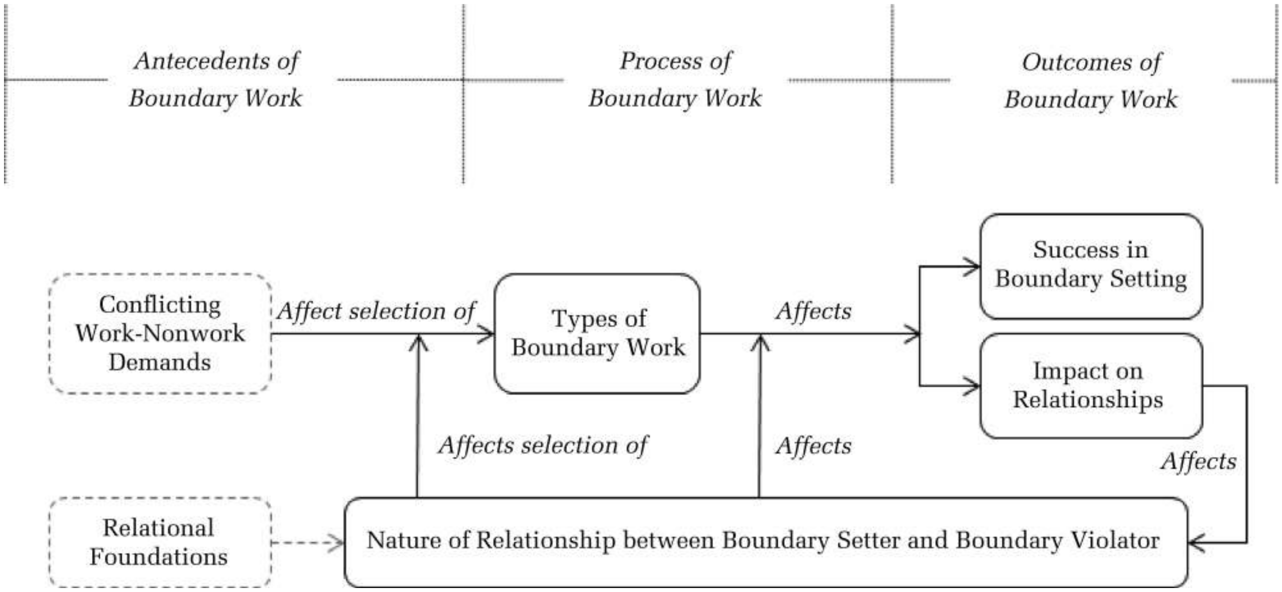
In what follows, I first examine the relational context of boundary work. Then, I characterize six types of boundary work and analyze their use and outcomes for the different types of relationships. Finally, I summarize how boundary work affects relationships over the long term.

THE RELATIONAL CONTEXT OF BOUNDARY WORK

Attorneys' relationships with others at work (colleagues, subordinates, supervisors, and clients) varied. Attorneys described most of their relationships with colleagues with whom they had worked for a while as "good relationships" characterized by high trust and low distrust regarding professional issues. I labeled these relationships "established." Attorneys in such relationships were good colleagues but not close, personal friends. Attorneys described a smaller set of "close" relationships in which their relationship partners were "good friends" whom they "liked a lot." People in these relationships trusted each other not only with work-related issues but with personal issues as well. Both established and close relationships can be considered "positive" (Ragins & Dutton, 2007), because they were mutually beneficial, but the breadth of connection between the two differed.

Not all relationships were positive, however. Some were characterized by suspicion and distrust. I therefore call them "leery" relationships. Some leery relationships have been longstanding, others short-lived. Attorneys said they "didn't like" a particular person because of something that happened between them or that they had heard "different nightmare stories" about working with that person. Although attorneys in these relationships sometimes trusted each other on certain things (for example, they might have believed that the other was capable of delivering a high-quality work product), they were distrustful on issues that pertained to

FIGURE 2
Boundary Work within the Context of Interpersonal Relationships[a]


Antecedents of Boundary Work
Process of Boundary Work
Outcomes of Boundary Work
Conflicting Work-Nonwork Demands
Affect selection of
Types of Boundary Work
Affects
Success in Boundary Setting
Impact on Relationships
Affects selection of
Affects
Affects
Relational Foundations
Nature of Relationship between Boundary Setter and Boundary Violator

[a] In addition to the nature of the relationships, the nature of the work and nonwork demands also importantly shaped the selection of boundary work tactics. Nonwork emergencies got priority; critical work tasks with imminent deadlines trumped everyday nonwork demands; and attorneys were more likely to try to find ways to attend to their nonwork interests and responsibilities when they were important to them and when things at work were running smoothly. While interesting, these differences and influences are not the focus of this research and are depicted in the model in a box bounded by a dotted line. The factors influencing the nature of relationships among attorneys, also not the focus of this study, are therefore also depicted within dotted lines.

boundary work, such as interest in helping the other to do boundary work effectively.

One attorney clearly captured the differences among the three types of relationships in the following accounts of how she related to three different clients. (The relationship type described is given in parentheses after each quotation.)

> With a lot of my clients, although I like to believe I have a decent to good rapport with them, it is a very professional rapport, you know, I had been talking to some guys for five or seven years and I know they are married with kids . . . but I don't know what their wives' names are, you know, I really have a great relationship, "hey, how are you doing, what's going on, what do you need," blah, blah, blah, but it's really professional. . . . I just don't have that depth of personal relationship with the client. (established relationship)

> Other clients . . . I know I work hard to have the relationship and maybe the clients who, you know . . . if they could be given the choice and no one knew what their choice was, they wouldn't be picking me. . . . So, I think with those clients, I tend to, you know, I really want to keep it very professional, I don't want to give them any opportunity to sense that I am going to be less than 150 percent committed to what is going on with them. (leery relationship)

> Then I guess, there is a third bucket of clients and this one company in particular where they all come to my [fundraising event], I just have a great rapport. . . . I am very close to the home management team. . . . The general counsel is a woman, the CEO is a guy, but he is very, I don't think, it has probably never dawned on him that his lead counsel at Mack & Clark is a Latina woman, you know, it's like "Claire" to him, he is very unique in that way, the CFO is a young CFO who is in his late thirties, because he is a young CFO, I am able to add a lot of value to what he does, so we have a great rapport. . . . I didn't have any reluctance [to talk about my personal situation]. (close relationship)

If a relationship had only recently begun, either because one of two individuals was new to the firm or because the two had not worked together and gotten to know one another before, they were not close and intimate. These "new" relationships were characterized by careful observation of each other and varied in their level of trust: some attorneys were generally more or less inclined to trust others, even without much specific information, and some had heard good things about a particular person from others whom they trusted, so they had good reasons for their positive expectations. Overall, in these relationships, attorneys did not actively distrust each other, but they referenced the fact that they did not know each other well and that this affected their expectations and behaviors as well as how others responded to them.

Differences in attorneys' relationships stemmed from myriad factors: how much they worked together on projects, how much time they spent together, whether or not they shared work- and nonwork-related interests, and whether they liked and respected each other. In addition, many attorneys were well aware of the impact that their relationships had on their ability to set desired work-nonwork boundaries and were therefore thoughtful about whom they worked with and how they developed relationships with them. They tried to make sure that they worked with others who were respectful of their boundaries and that they worked with the same people repeatedly, so that they could develop trust and avoid the constant pressure of having to make good first impressions.

Attorneys' acute awareness of the role of relationships and the purposeful work of developing relationships suggest that understanding of boundary work is not complete if it focuses only on what happens in response to a particular boundary violation, as has been the case in prior research (Kreiner et al., 2009). Instead, relational work begun much earlier creates the context within which a particular boundary violation takes place.

TYPES OF BOUNDARY WORK

When facing specific conflicting work-nonwork demands, attorneys strived to achieve not only substantive but also relational goals. They engaged in boundary setting to solve the substantive problem of these conflicting demands, and in "impression management" (managing others' impressions of boundary setters) and "self-management" (managing their own reactions to boundary work) to manage their relationships with boundary violators. Attorneys achieved these goals through two distinct interpersonal modes that reflected their approach-avoidance motivation (Elliot, 2008; Higgins, 1997): they included their relationship partners in boundary work, approaching them to take part in it, when they were motivated to set desired boundaries, make positive impressions on others, and make positive attributions about others; or attorneys excluded their relationship partners from involvement with the boundary work, avoiding them and keeping them at a distance while engaging in the boundary work in isolation, when they were motivated to avoid negative consequences of setting desired boundaries, to avoid making negative impressions on others, and to avoid guilt and blame.

This typology extends the theory of boundary work in two ways. First, it emphasizes that boundary work has not one but at least two goals: in addition to setting desired boundaries, individuals also want to actively manage their relationships. And second, it brings into focus a previously neglected aspect of boundary work—the motivation that underlies it.

Boundary Setting

Attorneys adopted the substantive goal of setting the work-nonwork boundaries as a way to actively address the central challenge of participating in multiple roles (Marks, 1977). Attorneys cared about their careers as well as their lives outside of work and tried to set boundaries that allowed them to meaningfully participate in both.

Approach boundary setting. In this type of boundary work, the substantive goal of setting the desired boundaries was achieved by joining forces with others. Attorneys shared details about their nonwork activities and included others in the decision-making process, they traded work time and free time with others, they gave others advance notice about their upcoming nonwork commitments, they imposed on others as little as possible while still meeting their own nonwork demands, and they offered alternative ways of achieving the other person's goals while achieving their own goals. Attorneys engaged others when they were primarily motivated to set desired boundaries (showing a promotion regulatory focus) rather than to make sure that others did not prevent them from doing so, and when they expected that others would help rather than hinder their efforts (showing an approach regulatory anticipation). In one example, an argument in a case was scheduled during a time when a partner on the case was going to be on vacation. He explained:

> I called the client and said . . . "look, if you want, I'll drop my vacation, I'll go, I'll do the argument, or I can have my partner whom you know very well and who has worked with you on these other cases do it instead," and their view was, if he could do it, then call him up. He [the partner] was happy to go do it.

Avoidance boundary setting. In avoidance boundary setting, boundary setters pursued their substantive goal on their own while keeping boundary violators at bay or even pushing them away. This allowed the boundary setters the opportunity to do boundary work privately and possibly prevent negative reactions to it, which reveals an avoidance motivation. Attorneys were trying to avoid negative consequences of involving others (showing a prevention regulatory focus) and expected others to have negative influence over their boundaries (showing an avoidance regulatory anticipation). This approach limited the exchange of information that could help them to find more effective solutions and prevented others from helping in the boundary work process. Avoidance boundary work took the form of making decisions without involving or considering others and sometimes of imposing significant burdens on boundary violators and others at work to meet nonwork demands. A partner explained how she made sure she was able to take a real vacation without having to respond to her colleagues or clients:

> I have found over time, the best place to go away in summer is where you can't be reached. So, this year we were going to Africa . . . we were in camps, there was no electricity, I mean, there was a generator, it went for a while, we used to have gas lamps in the tents, but we couldn't plug in appliances. There were no cell phone towers, there were no landline phones. There was no plug for your computer.

Impression Management

Attorneys actively managed the impressions their boundary setting made on others. They cared not only about their boundaries but also about the impact of boundary setting on their relationships and were therefore motivated to leave good impressions or to avoid leaving bad impressions on boundary violators.

Approach impression management. In approach impression management, boundary setters tried to create a positive image of themselves (showing a promotion regulatory focus) by sharing information and complying with boundary violators. They talked about their nonwork activities not as something they wanted to do but as something they had to do; they did not ask every time they wanted an accommodation but rather carefully chose the occasions in which they requested or insisted on time off; and they sometimes also gave into boundary violator's demands or requests without pushing back. This type of boundary work helped to keep others from getting upset, because boundary setters built a reputation for being hard working and willing to pitch in and not intentionally causing difficulties for others (Betancourt & Blair, 1992). A recently promoted partner, who had just accepted several assignments that required him to work well beyond normal hours, said:

> You know, there are times in your career where you just have to weather the storm, and this is one of those times, and you know, the way you handle it, you are going to be known for. If . . . people feel that I did a good job and I was a good soldier and I did it with a smile and everything seemed to work out . . . the take-away is good.

Avoidance impression management. Avoidance impression management involved pulling away from boundary violators and keeping them in the dark about nonwork commitments in the hope that it would be possible to set desired boundaries without the risk of coming across as less than fully dedicated to work (showing a prevention regulatory focus). The assumption was that if others knew about attorneys' boundary work, they would think poorly of them—a possibility that had to be avoided (showing avoidance regulatory anticipation). Attorneys therefore either did not talk about their nonwork at all, or they talked about it in vague terms ("another commitment," "another obligation") designed to create an impression that they needed to attend to another work-related obligation. An associate explained:

> So you see a client call come in at 5:45 p.m. on Wednesday and you know what they are asking, and so you may or may not take it, depending on what your days look like, are you trying to get out in the next ten minutes, or are you there for another two hours on something else.

Self-management

The third type of boundary work impacted boundary workers' own reactions to the process and outcomes of boundary work. Just as boundary violators' reactions to boundary work impacted relationships, so did boundary setters' own responses. Self-management activities consisted of rationalizations that attorneys used to justify their own actions and attributions they made about causes for others' behavior to themselves.

Approach self-management. In approach self-management, attorneys pursued positive relational outcomes by making positive attributions about their counterparts (showing a promotion regulatory focus). They chalked up lack of boundary success to the nature of their work rather than to the malevolence of their counterparts and reframed their nonwork activities that they were giving up as less appealing or framed work activity as something that was particularly important or desirable. An associate who ended up foregoing attending an event with her mother in order to respond to a partner's request to help him with some unexpected work explained:

> For me it was like, well, it's not Raphael's [her son's] school play, and so if it were Raphael's school play I would do it [attend it]. . . . I knew I needed to go [to work] that night because I knew that David [the partner] needed to prepare for [the] next day and that he would rely on me to help him do that. And so I went.

Avoidance self-management. In avoidance self-management, boundary setters saw boundary violators as negligently or even deliberately causing bad outcomes or preventing the setting of what they considered to be reasonable boundaries, and boundary violators saw boundary setters as inappropriately favoring personal things over work. With such negative attributions, attorneys avoided feeling guilty for pushing back at work (showing a prevention regulatory focus) and fended off blame that they anticipated from boundary violators (showing avoidance regulatory anticipation). One associate recalled:

> I was assigned . . . to one of these insane lack-of-respect partners. . . . It was my bar-swearing-in day and my family had come into town, where I was going to be sworn into the bar, and then we were going out for a nice dinner afterwards, and he was trying to make me miss my dinner so that I can come back and have a telephone call with the client about some due diligence I had done. . . . I said, well I'm available in the morning, can we just deal with it then, and he was very firm, for really almost what seemed no reason. I think he at times is very unbending.

DIFFERENCES IN BOUNDARY WORK AND ITS OUTCOMES BY RELATIONSHIP TYPE

The six types of boundary work were not used equally for all relationship types. In fact, the nature of relationships shaped attorneys' choices of boundary work. Boundary work therefore depended on more than the individual preferences and organizational policies identified in prior research (Kreiner et al., 2009; Nippert-Eng, 1996; Rothbard et al., 2005); it was contingent upon the nature of relationships within which it took place. Table 1 summarizes the use of types of boundary work across relationship types.

TABLE 1
Use of Types of Boundary Work for Types of Relationships[a]

Type of Boundary Work	Close Relationships, $n = 14$	Established Relationships, $n = 40$	Leery Relationships, $n = 14$	New Relationships, $n = 15$
Approach boundary setting, $n = 270$	High	High	Medium-high	Medium
Approach impression management, $n = 47$	Low	Medium-low	Medium-low	Medium-high
Approach self-management, $n = 23$		Medium-low		Medium-low
Avoidance boundary setting, $n = 51$		Low	Medium-low	Medium
Avoidance impression management, $n = 80$		Low	Medium-high	Medium
Avoidance self-management, $n = 12$			High	Low

[a] Frequency is described as "high" if a type of boundary work was used in one-half or more of the examples within a particular type of relationship, "medium" if it was used in between one-quarter and one-third of the examples, and "low" if it was used in 10 percent or fewer examples. "Medium-high" and "medium-low" categories cover the frequencies between medium and high and medium and low, respectively. Blank cells indicate that a particular type of boundary work was not used in a particular relationship type.

Boundary work in different relationships yielded different outcomes—it was not only the relationship type or the boundary work type that was important, but the combination of the two. Outcomes of boundary work for all types of boundary work and relationship are summarized in Figure 3.

In the remainder of this section, I explain how and why approaches to boundary work varied with relationships and how and why outcomes of boundary work depended on the combination of boundary work type and relationship type. Additional examples are provided in Table 2.

Boundary Work and Outcomes in Close Relationships

In close relationships, the approach mode of boundary work was used exclusively. In these relationships, characterized by trust regarding both work- and nonwork-related issues, attorneys felt that it was beneficial to invite others to participate in boundary work. They trusted that others would have their best interests at heart and that they would not hold it against them that they had interests and obligations outside of work. The caring and collaborative nature of their relationships was well suited to engaging others, sharing with them information about personal preferences and priorities, and jointly attempting to find win-win solutions. Their counterparts, in turn, took their personal needs seriously and did their best to accommodate. Attorneys in close relationships usually felt no need to actively manage others' impressions of them or their own reactions to boundary work. One associate explained:

> We're going to depose this guy, so we picked the date. And I'm on a case with two other lawyers, a partner and an associate that's more senior than me, and the three of us have been coming up with kind of our whole plan. . . . So Louise, the partner, says, "Let's do it on X date. Does that sound good to you guys?" And so I looked at my schedule. That day is Tina's [my fiancée's] birthday, I thought I would go to dinner with her. . . . So I said, "It's Tina's birthday and I'm flying out the next morning [for personal reasons], I can do it if I need to. But it's more difficult." And then we were talking about it and we changed it to two days earlier. . . . These are two lawyers I like a lot, I know them, and . . . you know, I've talked with Louise about Tina.

Approach boundary work in close relationships led to very positive substantive and relational outcomes. Attorneys were comfortable disclosing personal information and engaging others in finding helpful solutions without worrying about the impact doing so might have on their relationships. Their boundary work often had positive impact on relationships, as boundary setters appreciated their counterparts' help, and counterparts reinforced their commitment to boundary setters (Festinger, 1957; Hinde, 1997). One of counsel, who was facing a very difficult family situation, described the tremendous support she enjoyed from the partners with whom she had developed close relationships:

> [I told] partners and associates I am close to [about the situation], the two partners that I worked the most with, I told them right off the bat, and if you know them, they are exceptional people, they are both great at what they do, they are well respected in the firm, the clients love them, they also happen to

FIGURE 3
Outcomes of Boundary Work by Type of Boundary Work and Relationship Type[a]

Type of Boundary Work/ Relationship Type		**Close**			**Established**			**Leery**			**New**			***Overall Outcomes by Type of Boundary Work***		
	Impact on Relationship / **Success in Boundary Setting**	No Success	Partial Success	Complete Success	No Success	Partial Success	Complete Success	No Success	Partial Success	Complete Success	No Success	Partial Success	Complete Success	No Success	Partial Success	Complete Success
Approach boundary setting	Positive			11									5			
	Neutral						27									62
	Negative								6							
Approach managing impressions	Positive			1												
	Neutral					6						7			23	
	Negative								2							
Approach managing self	Positive					5										
	Neutral										2			9		
	Negative															
Avoidance boundary setting	Positive															
	Neutral						2									
	Negative									3			4			12
Avoidance managing impressions	Positive															
	Neutral						4			6		4			16	
	Negative															
Avoidance managing self	Positive															
	Neutral															
	Negative								7				1		8	
Overall outcomes by relationship type	Positive			14												
	Neutral						40					15			96	
	Negative								14							

[a] The shaded outcome quadrant for each type of boundary work/type of relationship combination represents the average outcome that the particular boundary work type led to when it was used in a particular type of relationship. The number in each shaded cell denotes the number of examples on which the average was based—all examples of a particular type that were coded for all necessary aspects. For example, approach boundary setting in close relationships on the average led to complete boundary success and positive impact on relationships. To arrive at the average, I coded "complete boundary success" as 1, "partial success" as 0, and "no success" as –1; I coded "positive impact on relationships" as 1, "neutral impact" as 0, and "negative impact" as –1. After calculating the average, I rounded it to the nearest integer.

TABLE 2
Sample Quotations for Types of Boundary Work for Types of Relationships[a]

Boundary Work/ Relationship Type	Sample Quotations
Approach boundary setting	
Close relationship	One of my really good friends was the person who was immediately more senior to me on the deal, but we were close enough in experience level that we could trade-off work, and divide and conquer lifestyle, and he had . . . a boating class . . . on Saturday morning, and we were on a deal that every Saturday for two months . . . we would be in the office at 8 a.m. Saturday morning and we would work every Saturday, but . . . he never missed his class, because I'd get in there and cover at 8 a.m. every day, and on the Saturday nights where we have to work late, he would explicitly say, "All right . . . you go at 8 p.m. and I'll stay until 10." So, you can work off having good relationship with people, [it] allows you to sort of work off things.
Established relationship	When my wife and I bought our apartment, I was in the middle of this IPO. . . . I had talked to the senior associate, you know, "I need to move on this day, I cannot be there for some of it, when do you need me back?" [The senior associate replied] "Well, it will be great if you'd be back by 2." I responded, "Well, hw about 4:30. I mean it is going to be an all-nighter anyway, you know that it's going to be an all-nighter, what's the difference between 2 and 4?" And you get back as soon as you can, as soon as you know the movers are gone or whatever.
Leery relationship	[This senior associate mentioned how she thinks that partners from another location, with whom she sometimes worked, did not trust her. She resented that.] The first time I mentioned to [such] a partner, "I am going to work from home," there was this rush of panic, will he be able to revise the document [the partner was wondering]. "Yes," I do have technology at home, I have a very fully equipped home office and most of the time people don't even realize [I am working from home].
New relationship	What I try to do whenever I work with a new partner is sort of say, hey, here [are] some limits that apply to me, I want to let you know up front. . . . I send them a little e-mail usually, I created a document, and I say, hey, here are a couple of constraints, one is I'm part-time, fatigue, and I want to be involved in church . . . and the other is, except in exceptional circumstances, I . . . try to observe the Sabbath.
Approach impression management	
Close relationship	I was working on a transaction that . . . there was specific time point that was very important that it had to close and I was working with another partner who I love working with and we were waiting for the client to provide comments on a draft so that we could get it out, turn it, do whatever we had to do, and I think we or I had worked on it over the weekend and we've gotten it to this client at the beginning of the day, the day drags on, blah, blah, blah, and it just so happened that my husband was traveling and my son had to be picked up . . . and my husband normally did that. . . . So, in this particular case, I had already had a conversation with partner, "Look, I got to get out of here right at 5:30 or 6 o'clock, I have to pick up my son, X, Y, and Z," and ultimately he picked up the phone and called the client and said look, "Christy has a family, Christy needs to be back at X hour, if you want us to do A, B, and C today, we need to hear from you by 4 o'clock or if you want us to send the document out tonight, you can't have extensive comments at 5:30" and ultimately took the bull by the horns and did that.
Established relationship	[There was a transaction in] August that was on a very fast track for a client that I had done a number of deals with so I was the logical person to work on it, and I also wanted to work on it, but it was at a time when my mother-in-law was visiting, so they needed someone, I think it was like on a Monday, they needed someone to go to Pittsburgh from Wednesday through Friday and I said that, you know, I couldn't go because of having her visiting because it was kind of unfortunate timing but that's the way it was and I couldn't just abandon her.
New relationship	I probably just give in too much . . . when you're working with people, you know, that still feel like you're trying to impress or have to prove yourself with.
Approach self-management	
Established relationship	It was the Friday after Thanksgiving, I had to come in and we had something due on Monday and there was absolutely no way it was going to get done. And that was unpleasant. . . . I mean, that's the difference with who you answer to [a partner or the court]. It's far easier to . . . call someone from the firm [than the court] and say, "You know, I need an extra day to work." Most [partners] are pretty understanding, assuming it's not something that needs to go to a court. [But this had to go to court, so there was no flexibility.]
New relationship	During my first year . . . this engagement party was in New York on a Saturday and I mentioned it, probably on a Friday, maybe Friday morning, and I didn't say that it was a commitment I had to go to. I said, "It's my roommate from college, I'd really like to go, I am not going to be able to go to her wedding, I'd really like to go," and I think that was a bad approach to it, first of all waiting to let people know, and second, my presentation of the commitment being sort of wavering on it—I saw the time pass but then it was "5 o'clock, I'm sorry." So I think I didn't present how important that commitment was to me.

Continued

TABLE 2
(Continued)

Boundary Work/ Relationship Type	Sample Quotations
Avoidance boundary setting	
Established relationship	Sometimes he [a partner I work with frequently] will call like Friday at 2, and you know, you don't call him back until Monday and it will be like, "Oh, I was caught up doing four different things," or send him an e-mail Saturday morning and say, "You know, I was caught up doing four different things, sorry I didn't return your call last night, Can we talk Monday morning?"
Leery relationship	Increasingly I think there is a sense . . . people don't see themselves as staying in the law firm, they see it as they are here for 2 or 3 years to pay off their debt, they are getting out of here because . . . perception is I'm not going to make it [to partner]. So, "What the hell, so, dinner or a movie or a symphony, I'm busy," you know. "*You* lead a nutty life, not *me*," and so increasingly I hear associates saying, "gee, I'm sorry, I'm going to a wedding this weekend," go ahead, that's fine, next weekend, "I can't work this weekend," "no," five weekends in a row and you finally say, "Is it between you and me? *You* need to work," and the answer is, "Well, I don't want to."
New relationship	This was probably December of my first year, I was here for about 3 months, and it was my bar-swearing-in day and my family had come into town where I was going to be sworn into the bar and then we were going out for a nice dinner afterwards, and [the partner] was trying to make me miss my dinner so that I can come back and have a telephone call with the client about some due diligence . . . that was one issue where, I basically put my foot down, I said, "I am sorry, I am not available," and so I don't think we ever ended up having the call.
Avoidance impression management	
Established relationship	I'm on a case with [another associate] and she is the type of person who, if someone emails her, she just responds. And she just kind of won't hesitate before taking on work, whereas I think I would say, "OK, I've got a meeting in an hour. I'm getting ready for that. I'll go to that meeting. I'll look at this tomorrow.". . . [I] am aware that I don't have to only answer to other people. I have my own schedule and priorities. . . . I end up doing more like long-term things and things that I'm more interested in. But a lot of it's just because like she's willing to take that on and she just kind of takes it. And I'm glad that it's happening and she does it and I don't. And I don't think it's affecting me badly at all. . . . We have a nice working relationship too, me and the partner.
Leery relationship	[To people who might disagree with my choices, I say] "Oh, I'm not available," I am not giving a reason why, because if something [is] important to me, doesn't really matter what it is, whether it's considered legit in someone else's life.
New relationship	During my first year, I think one was the engagement party that I mentioned [I missed]. I was nervous about revealing that I might have a personal commitment, that work was not the most important thing in every aspect. So I waited very late. This engagement party was in New York on a Saturday and I mentioned it, probably on a Friday, maybe Friday morning. . . and I think that was a bad approach to it . . . waiting to let people know. . . . So that partner, who is very nice, very hard working [chuckles], this is my first year and I am working every single weekend, and on the Saturday, I mentioned it to him again that I'd really like to go as long as I can leave here at 4 o'clock I can still make it to the party. So we got in early, about 8 o'clock in the morning on Saturday, and we're working and then keep looking at his watch, it's 2 o'clock, it's 2 o'clock, two more hours, two more hours, we'll try to get you out, we'll try to get you out, and then it ended up being, I mean, I saw the time pass but then it was "5 o'clock, I'm sorry."
Avoidance self-management	
Leery relationship	It was back when I was in my first or second year. I was working for a senior associate doing research on a legal issue, and it was a very frustrating experience, and I think because of the personality involved. . . . But it was a situation where sort of like one of these trying to find a needle in a haystack case, or like trying to prove a negative. So I had done some research Thursday and Friday, I came up with what I thought was the right answer, but it wasn't exact, it was, you know [close], and I said, "I need to go away." And she said, "No, you can't. You need to stay." Or maybe I offered to not stay, but, you know, "I can check in, or something like that. Bring my computer with me." She said, "No, you need to stay." And I spent the whole weekend looking for this needle in a haystack and I didn't find it. And she made me feel bad for not finding it. And sort of brought me into this meeting, they kind of called me on the carpet before the partner, and I presented the partner what I found, the best thing that I found, which is what I had found on Friday, and he said, "That's perfect." So it was a very frustrating experience. It felt like I wasted my weekend. You know, not only that I had to cancel my plans, but I did so unnecessarily because this person [the senior associate] wasn't happy.

[a] A variety of boundary work types were often used simultaneously. When appropriate, therefore, the same quotation is used to illustrate two boundary work types.

> be really good human beings, and I think right off the bat, [they] tried to establish a culture of "do what you need to do, put your family first, clients and the firm come second, we will fill in the slack when we need to" . . . and I think they really took it upon themselves to kind of help me a little bit at a point where I couldn't even think clearly about what I was doing. . . . So the firm really, in the form of the partners that I worked the closest with, really came to my aid.

The positive outcomes were consequences of a self-reinforcing spiral: approach boundary work took place in close relationships and further strengthened them. The close nature of the relationships enabled approach boundary work—because attorneys trusted their counterparts and believed that their counterparts would want to help and not abuse or misinterpret the shared information (showing an approach regulatory anticipation), they were more open as well as more interested in further developing the relationships. This attitude, in turn, elicited genuine attempts to help that were consistent with the closeness of relationships and therefore led to positive boundary outcomes and stronger relationships.

Boundary Work and Outcomes in Established Relationships

In established relationships, characterized by trust about professional issues and relatively superficial understanding of each other's personal needs and priorities, attorneys were able to search for mutually acceptable alternatives to getting work done without causing doubts about their commitment, but they were careful about how much they asked for and how much they disclosed about their personal preferences and priorities. Boundary work was therefore predominantly conducted through approach boundary setting, but more often than in close relationships was complemented by impression management. One associate provided this example:

> Last night, I had to leave for a parent-teacher conference a little early. It was like back-to-school night . . . 5:30 p.m., 5:45 p.m. came, and I turned off my lights, my computer. . . . I just went and just checked my BlackBerry a lot and checked my voice mail, and then brought some work with me and did some work when I got home. . . . It's not out of an embarrassment that I am taking care of my kids, but I feel like unless there is a direct conflict where I cannot do something [I don't see a need to say it]. And I will say that, if there is a direct conflict, I will say to somebody here, I have no hesitance, "I am taking care of my kids, I have a problem. How can we work out this schedule?" There have been times when, due to vacations or doctor's appointments or school meetings or whatever, where I've said, "I'm just not available for that block of time, can we do the meeting at some other time?"

Boundary work in established relationships rarely involved active self-management; when it did, attorneys used approach self-management, making benevolent attributions about their counterparts and their motivations and instead blaming the nature of their work or circumstances for their challenges. In one example, a senior associate had to cancel weekend plans with his wife:

> I just had to cancel, a deal came up, they needed to close the following Tuesday and there was just no possible way of being out of commission for three straight days, so I canceled. . . . I was working with a partner, but I was doing the bulk of the work . . . and this is for a client who we do a lot of work for. . . . I will work on 80 percent of the deals that they do. So, I know how they like to do things, I know how they like to manage the process and things of that sort. . . . There just could have been no way to just plug someone else in, that's my point.

Outcomes in established relationships were generally quite positive, with very high success in boundary setting, but the impact on relationships was more often neutral than positive (and negative in only one single case). One associate described a typical example:

> There is one partner who I do a bunch of work with . . . sometimes he will call like Friday at 2 p.m., and you know, you don't call him back until Monday. . . . And he doesn't mind that . . . he never said anything about it to me. . . . We never had a conversation . . . where I would say, "I really don't want to talk Fridays at 5:30, that doesn't work for my life."

The contrast with the example of a close relationship, in which the associate clearly and openly told the partner about his fiancée's birthday, is telling. The level of mutual trust in established relationships was high enough to support cooperation—although the associate did not do exactly what the partner asked him to do, he was making sure that the partner was not disturbed by this—but there was less interest in developing their relationship beyond its current state. This was typical for individuals who preferred segmentation between work and nonwork domains. Although established relationships allowed for such separation, close relationships called for a degree of integration that was not comfortable for everyone.

When attorneys in established relationships experienced particularly generous help in response to their nonwork demands, however, these experiences played the role of anchoring events (Ballinger & Rockmann, 2010) that seemed to significantly change the tenor of the established relationship, potentially making it a close relationship.

Boundary Work and Outcomes in New Relationships

In new relationships, the use of approach and avoidance boundary work was more balanced than in close and established relationships, perhaps because the ambiguity of a new relationship allowed for individuals' tendencies toward approach or avoidance motivation to play a larger role (Elliot & Thrash, 2002). Still, the main emphasis was on impression management. While the level of trust between individuals in new relationships varied (Kramer & Cook, 2004; Lount et al., 2008; McKnight, Cummings, & Chervany, 1998), most attorneys seemed to intuit that positive first impressions were critical and that early breaches of trust could jeopardize their relationships in the long run (Kim, Dirks, & Cooper, 2009; Lount et al., 2008)—not only for future boundary work but also for their career advancement (Lazega, 2001). One associate explained:

> I think I tend to be less willing to do it [be open about my plans] with partners I have never worked for before, just because I feel like, you know, they don't really know you and so their first interaction with you is, "Oh, I can't really do that for you," and it may not be fair, but that's a hard first impression to make, so I think I would be much less inclined to do that with someone I have never worked with before.

Interestingly, on average, attorneys' choice of approach or avoidance impression management in new relationships made little difference in relational or substantive outcomes.

Success in boundary setting in new relationships was, on average, partial, and impact on relationships was neutral, but these averages conceal a lot of variability. In some cases, boundary setters compromised on boundaries—that is, they accepted no boundary success, to cultivate their fledgling relationships, following the logic that first impressions would be critical for future relationship development (Lewicki & Bunker, 1995). Their logic was partially correct. If attorneys engaged in avoidance boundary setting, making their own decisions without involving others with whom they had little experience, the new relationships did sour; boundary violators based their conclusions about boundary setters' overall commitment, responsibility, and maturity on their single boundary decision, and boundary setters resented such negative judgments. The associate who described his experience on the day he was sworn into the bar explained that the partner that he had pushed back against was upset enough to formally complain, which was one of the reasons he still considered him an "insane, lack-of-respect partner" more than four years later, when we talked. With approach boundary setting, however, attorneys in new relationships were generally able to set their desired boundaries without jeopardizing their relationships.

Boundary Work and Outcomes in Leery Relationships

Boundary work in leery relationships reflected boundary setters' suspicions about boundary violators: the dominant motivation was to prevent boundary violators from having a negative impact on boundary setters. Because of this distrust, attorneys conducted boundary work very carefully, if possible without letting others know. They involved others only when they felt that their circumstances provided strong support for their desired boundaries that would override any negative interpersonal feelings. This happened when associates felt that their nonwork commitments were very important from some objective perspective (not just from their own) or when they thought the accommodations they were seeking would not affect work in any meaningful way. In such cases, the nature of their relationships, which would suggest avoidance motivation, was overridden by other aspects of the situation and led to the dominance of approach motivation. But, as was not the case in other types of relationships, approach boundary setting did not help in leery relationships; both outcomes were similar if approach or avoidance boundary setting were used, most often because boundary setters were offended by their counterparts' reactions, resulting in boundary setters having to compromise their boundaries. Perhaps these outcomes were affected through what information was attended to, how ambiguous social information was interpreted, and how much weight it got from people's relational counterparts (Gable & Berkman, 2008). An associate provided an example:

> It was Memorial Day weekend of this year . . . we scheduled a meeting like the Monday of Memorial Day, like that, you know, the Monday before. So, well, like okay, that should mean that the weekend should be fine, because the meeting was at the beginning of the week. So then I scheduled to go out of town for Memorial Day weekend. Well, then the meeting got moved to the Friday that I was going out of town, so it was like, "Why did you schedule to go out of town? Everybody can't go out of town on holidays!" And then it was, "You can't go out of town every weekend this summer." I'm like, "What are you talking about?! I have been only out of town for once this whole year!!"

In impression management, attorneys used predominantly avoidance style, keeping information about their boundary work from their counterparts to avoid their negative reactions. In addition, because of the nature of leery relationships, attorneys exclusively used avoidance self-management; they very often made harsh attributions about one another. They interpreted others' actions and reactions in line with their a priori expectations, so they saw their counterparts as acting with bad intentions (Lewicki & Bunker, 1996).

In leery relationships, success in setting boundaries varied, but impact on relationships was consistently negative. Although attorneys were sometimes able to impose their desired boundaries and had to compromise them when boundary violators were able to intervene in time, there were not many options with respect to relationships. Once attorneys distrusted one another, they had little interest in working with or disproving their assumptions about one another. Instead, boundary work quite consistently led to a reinforced sense that one or the other party was unreasonable, uncommitted, or corrupt, which only increased the level of distrust.

Impact of Boundary Work on the Nature of Relationships

Sometimes the impact of boundary work on relationships was significant enough to change their nature over the long run. If attorneys pitched in at work, even when it was difficult for them to do so, and others showed understanding for their desired boundaries, mutual trust and respect gradually grew as positive experiences accumulated (Ferrin, Bligh, & Kohles, 2008; McAllister, 1995). In addition, situations in which one or the other party was much more or much less cooperative than expected quickly shifted the nature of relationships (Ballinger & Rockmann, 2010). Difficult situations outside of work often forced attorneys who were otherwise relatively private to share more personal information, which in turn brought them closer to their colleagues, just as prior research would predict (Collins & Miller, 1994; Hinde, 1997; Levesque, Steciuk, & Ledley, 2002). On the other hand, negative experiences in boundary work sometimes permanently soured relationships. When either a boundary setter or a boundary violator concluded that the other was unreliable, disrespectful, or morally wrong, they both became leery and made efforts to no longer work with the other in the future. The example of the associate who referred to his boundary violator as an "insane, lack-of-respect partner" years after their altercation illustrates the point. If boundary violators had negative experiences with boundary setters, they also permanently changed their views. A partner, for example, told me that if associates were not as dedicated to work as he expected them to be (measured in part by their boundary work), he was done with them: "I'm not going to say, 'You need to work harder.' I'm just going to dismiss them as having any long-term prospects here." Both, positive and negative experiences in boundary work therefore had the capacity to affect the nature of relationships in the long run (Ballinger & Rockmann, 2010) and thus change the circumstances in which future boundary work would be conducted.

SUMMARY MODEL AND PROPOSITIONS

Taken together, these findings demonstrate the complex interplay between interpersonal relationships and boundary work. First, relationships represent the context within which boundary work takes place. The relationship development that takes place prior to boundary work is therefore its important antecedent. The nature of relationships as they are when boundary work takes place affects the selection of types of boundary work but also affects the outcomes that boundary work leads to. Two salient outcomes—success in boundary setting and impact of boundary work on relationships—therefore depend on both the type of boundary work and the nature of relationships between boundary setters and boundary violators. Finally, boundary work sometimes changes the nature of relationships more lastingly, significantly affecting the context within which future episodes of boundary work take place. These findings are summarized in Figure 2 and elaborated in more detail in the following propositions.

> *Proposition 1. Boundary work has substantive and relational goals: to set desired boundaries and to manage relationships with others through managing impressions and managing oneself.*

> *Proposition 2. The nature of relationships between boundary setters and boundary violators shapes approach-avoidance motivation (regulatory focus and regulatory anticipation), in that boundary setters (a) use approach boundary work when they trust their counterparts regarding the outcomes of boundary work or when they are interested in further developing their relationships and (b) use avoidance boundary work when they lack trust in their counterparts or actively distrust them and therefore expect engaging them in the boundary work process to have negative consequences.*

> *Proposition 3. The interdependence of substantive and relational goals of boundary work depends on the nature of the relationships within which boundary work takes place: (a) In close relationships, positive outcomes on substantive and relational goals can be simultaneously obtained, but sometimes substantive goals are compromised in order to obtain relational goals. (b) In established relationships, positive outcomes on substantive goals are usually obtained, but relational goals are reduced (i.e., positive impact on the relationship is not necessarily pursued, neutral impact is satisfactory). (c) In new relationships, success in boundary setting and impact on relationships are often traded off—complete success in boundary setting is usually obtained at the cost of negative impact on the new relationship, and a positive impact on the relationship is usually obtained by compromising success in boundary setting. (d) In leery relationships, further negative impact on relationships is practically inevitable: if success is obtained in boundary setting, negative impact on relationships usually stems from boundary violators' negative reaction; if boundary violators prevent the setting of desired boundaries, negative impact on relationships usually stems from boundary setters' negative reactions.*

DISCUSSION

I embarked on this research to develop theory about the process of boundary work and to identify effective approaches to it. While studying how attorneys in a large law firm do boundary work, I recognized that this process lies at the intersection of three rich but thus far disconnected literatures on work-nonwork boundaries, interpersonal relationships, and human motivation. By integrating these literatures into theory of boundary work, I add breadth and precision to boundary theory. At the most general level, this study theoretically repositions boundary work as a fundamentally relational process, as depicted in Figure 2. A more detailed consideration of the findings yields three theoretical contributions. First, my study shows that boundary work cannot be fully understood unless the relationships within which it takes place are considered. In addition to individual differences and structural factors that have been thus far thought to impact boundary work (cf. Kossek et al., 2005), interpersonal relationships also critically shape it, so that boundary work is done differently within different types of relationships. Second, I find that boundary work is oriented not only toward substantive goals—that is, the boundaries that have been considered in previous research (e.g., Kreiner et al., 2009; Nippert-Eng, 1996)—but also toward relational goals as well. Individuals pursue these goals with either approach or avoidance motivation, which explains the differences in boundary work among relationship types. Third, I find that boundary work has measurable and predictable outcomes that depend on the nature of the relationships and the type of boundary work employed. The two sets of outcomes—substantive and relational—reflect the goals that individuals pursue and depend on the combination of the type of boundary work and the type of relationship within which it takes place. In the remainder of this discussion, I elaborate on theoretical and practical implications of these insights and provide suggestions for future research.

Boundary Work Is a Relational Process

Boundary work is shaped not only by individual differences and structural factors (cf. Kossek et al., 2005) but also by interpersonal relationships within which it takes place. The nature of interpersonal connections shapes the possibilities for and experiences of boundary work. Attorneys recognized the importance of relationships in the boundary work process and purposefully developed their relationships to prepare them for boundary work. Once they engaged in boundary work, they did so differently in different types of relationships.

Expanding focus from individual differences and structural factors that influence boundary work to interpersonal relationships within which boundary work takes place explicitly underscores the role of individual agency in boundary work. Individuals can cocreate their relationships with others at work more easily than they can affect their personality characteristics or organizational structures. Although some research on agency in boundary work has been conducted (Kreiner et al., 2009), it did not identify the nature of relationships as an important factor shaping the options available to an individual. Indeed, it implied that all identified boundary work tactics were available to all individuals. My study, in contrast, suggests that individuals have to make choices about the kinds of relationships they want to develop with their colleagues and clients and that these choices, in turn, impact the boundary work types that are available to them within those relationships.

In light of this idea, it is important for future boundary theory to go beyond *interactions* (Ashforth et al., 2000; Clark, 2000; Desrochers & Sargent, 2004; Kreiner et al., 2009; Nippert-Eng, 1996; Perlow, 1998), which it has considered thus far, and instead examine boundary work in the context of *relationships*, the connectedness between two people that results from a series of interactions characterized by mutuality and continuity (Hinde, 1997). An instance of boundary work does not take place in isolation but represents one link in the chain of interactions that constitute a relationship. Individuals make choices in that instance with understanding of what has happened before and with an eye on what the future might hold. Individuals' ability to effectively conduct boundary work is shaped long before a specific conflict between work and nonwork demands that require boundary work—by shaping the relationships within which it happens. It is therefore appropriate to expand the concept of boundary work, at least in the broader sense, to include that "preparatory" relational work that sets the context for specific boundary work episodes (depicted as an antecedent of boundary work in Figure 2). Only by considering boundary work in its relational context will boundary theory be able to provide a complete understanding of boundary work as it is experienced by those who engage in it.

The Selection of Boundary Work Type Is Driven by Approach-Avoidance Motivation

My findings go beyond the mere observation that boundary work differed in different types of relationships. I find that, while conducting boundary work, attorneys pursued not only substantive goals, those related to boundaries, but also relational goals—those related to their ongoing connections to others in the workplace. They pursued these goals with either approach or avoidance motivation, depending on the nature of a relationship—its duration and the partners' mutual trust and closeness. The motivation, in turn, drove the selection of boundary work type. This represents the first explicit attempt to understand the motivation for boundary work and the mechanism that underlies the selection of different ways to conduct boundary work. This finding is consistent with relationship research, which has long claimed that closeness underlies many relationship phenomena, including giving and receiving of benefits (Berscheid, Snyder, & Omoto, 1989; Clark & Reis, 1988), but goes a step further to explain the mechanism that underlies this tendency.

The incorporation of approach-avoidance motivation theory (Elliot, 2008) and its underlying principles of regulatory focus and regulatory anticipation (Higgins, 1997) promises a fruitful change in boundary theory focus. Instead of examining only how people do boundary work, researchers now have a way of exploring *why* people do what they do. The former approach implies that any approach to boundary work suits any number of circumstances. In contrast, my findings suggest that under certain circumstances—that is, in certain types of relationships—individuals will not be motivated to use certain tactics, even if those tactics have proven to be effective in other settings. Moreover, the notion of motivation implies room for individual agency and for influence in boundary work that is far more specific than general notions of supportive organizational cultures (e.g., Burke, 1997; Casper, Weltman, & Kwesiga, 2007) and even more specific than particular supportive organizational policies and practices (e.g., Clark, 2001; Thomas & Ganster, 1995). It provides a theoretical link between types of relationships and boundary work outcomes and thus delineates choices about the kinds of relationships individuals want to create at work and the consequences of these choices for boundary work. Since individuals' beliefs about whether positive or negative outcomes are more likely forthcoming when engaging others in boundary work (i.e., regulatory anticipation) are shaped by the nature of relationships within which boundary work takes place, this theory also provides reasons for organizations to support the development of positive relationships. Finally, approach-avoidance motivation theory provides the basis for a new theoretically grounded classification of boundary work types, one that can be linked not only to choices of approaches but also to their effectiveness within different types of relationships, something that none of the previous classifications (Kreiner et al., 2009; Nippert-Eng, 1996; Perlow, 1998) has provided.

Boundary Work's Substantive and Relational Outcomes Depend on the Combination of Type of Boundary Work and Type of Relationship

Boundary work impacts not only work-nonwork boundaries but also the views that relationship partners have of each other and thus the nature of their connection. What additionally reaffirms the relational nature of boundary work is the finding that these outcomes depend on the combination of boundary work type and the type of relationship within which boundary work takes place. Although some boundary work types tend to be more effective than others, their effectiveness differs across the types of relationships (see Figure 3). Several theoretical and practical implications stem from this.

First, the two outcomes require future research to address success in boundary setting in context rather than alone. Setting desired boundaries, when tainted by strained relationships, may exacerbate rather than reduce stress (Bolger, DeLongis, Kessler, & Schilling, 1989) and thus defeat the purpose of reducing work-nonwork conflict; on the flip side, compromises regarding boundaries may not be a bad choice if they benefit relationships. In addition, boundary work's negative impact on relationships may importantly contribute to negative career consequences that many boundary setters experience. Although organizational culture clearly affects individuals' experiences, the decisions that negatively impact those who set work-nonwork boundaries are made by individuals. The quality of a relationship may not be a perfect predictor of the favorableness of such decisions (e.g., negative consequences may follow not only because of a strained relationship but also because of the changed impressions that are not consistent with the ideal worker, even if the relationship stays intact), but it is likely quite influential. In fact, much research suggests a connection between the quality of relationships and career success (Briscoe & Kellogg, 2011; Burt, 2000; Thomas & Kram, 1988). That said, close relationships may also prevent backlash that arises when an individual attends to nonwork activities others do not see as particularly important. In close, one-on-one relationships, people make an effort to enable others to achieve their boundary goals not because of the importance of a particular nonwork activity but because of the importance of the relationships, and they do that without a grudge.

Second, differences in outcomes across relationship types offer a potential theoretical insight into the segmentation/integration preferences central to boundary work theory (Kreiner, 2006; Nippert-Eng, 1996; Rothbard et al., 2005). Previous research has documented different preferences along the segmentation-integration continuum but had little to say about the reasons for their existence. My study suggests that, at least to the extent that segmentation and integration refer to sharing information about nonwork at work (i.e., role referencing [Olson-Buchanan & Boswell, 2006]), individuals may strategically choose one or the other as part of preparing their relationships for future boundary work. This finding also has practical implications. Developing close relationships at work may go against the sense of those who strive to segment work and nonwork domains. However, an individual's decision to strictly segment work and nonwork domains may impose important restrictions on his or her boundary work options. In this study, the most effective boundary work was conducted by including others and sharing information with them in close relationships that went beyond professional issues. If an individual is not willing to reveal any personal information, close relationships cannot develop and approach boundary work becomes harder. If, however, an individual is willing to share information, boundary work can become a more collaborative and often more effective effort.

Third, the potentially lasting impact of boundary work on relationships has implications for future research and for practice. Research needs to go beyond explaining responses to direct boundary violations (Kreiner et al., 2009) to probing the complexities of the boundary work process that depend on previous interactions and take into account possible future ones. Reinforcing spirals—that is, positive impacts on relationships that are already close and negative impacts on relationships that are leery to begin with—may not be surprising from a relational perspective (Ferrin et al., 2008), but they do suggest that the challenges of boundary work evolve over time: they increase in some relationships (those on a negative spiral) and decrease in others (those on a positive spiral). Considering responses to particular boundary violations without considering the dynamics of boundary work and relationships over time therefore decontextualizes the phenomenon in a way that is bound to yield misleading conclusions. The practical implication of the long-term effect of boundary work on relationships stems from the recent finding that relational closeness buffers the impact of relationship conflict on group-level helping and on counterproductive behavior (Rispens, Greer, Jehn, & Thatcher, 2011). If not for effective boundary work, then for group-level functioning, organizations should be interested in facilitating boundary work with positive impact on relationships. To do so, organizations can foster a culture that acknowledges life outside of work as legitimate, so that individuals are less reluctant and careful in talking about it. Further, since new relationships are challenging and inevitably characterized by high impression management, organizations can also work to support development of longer-lasting relationships rather than require that individuals work with ever new counterparts. Finally, since boundary work in leery relationships consistently leads to additional deterioration of boundary work, organizations would do well to support the dissolution of such relationships when possible.

Conclusion

This study provides empirical evidence for the intersection of three rich but thus far disconnected literatures on work-nonwork boundaries, interpersonal relationships, and human motivation. It offers a novel theoretical understanding of boundary work as a fundamentally relational process that differs systematically across the types of relationships within which it takes place. What was designed as a grounded study of boundary work required me to understand how the process was recursively involved with interpersonal relationships. It revealed that the nature of relationships within which boundary work was taking place impacted individuals' motivations in pursuing boundary work: in some relationships individuals were driven by approach motivation, in others by avoidance motivation, and each resulted in a different type of boundary work. Boundary work type combined with relationship type predicted substantive as well as relational outcomes of boundary work. There is a clear overall upshot of the study: Boundary work is shaped not only by the structure of the job and individual differences (Kossek et al., 2005) but also by the relationships in which it takes place. To understand boundary work theoretically and to provide practical recommendations, scholars need to consider it in its relational context.

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APPENDIX
Interview Protocol[a]

Background questions:

1. Can you briefly describe your job? (What do you do? Do you travel? How is your work assigned to you? . . .)
2. Can you briefly describe your commitments and interests outside of work? (Family, other care, boards, other commitments, hobbies and interests, other pulls on your time)

3. What does your typical workday look like? (When do you get up? When do you get to the office? When do you leave . . . lunch, commute, free time, sleep, child care?)
4. Do you work on weekends? Do you take vacation? (How much and how often?) What do you do in preparation?
5. How many hours did you bill last year?
6. How easy or difficult do you find it to balance your work and your commitments and interests outside of work?

Example:

7. Please, describe a recent time when you had to resolve a conflict or some tension between your work and non-work life. (Probes: When did it happen? Can you describe the situation? What led up to this situation? What exactly did you do? How did you decide to do that? Was anyone else involved? What did they do? How did the situation play out for you? Did you get what you wanted? Were there any other consequences, such as others' impressions of you, any other long-term implications, etc.? How did you feel about the outcome? What do you think was critical for it playing out the way it did? What circumstances enabled you to do what you did?)

General boundary setting:

8. Can you think of other things that you did at times to balance work and non-work the way you want to?
9. Can you think of things that you did at times when others did not agree or you thought they might not agree with how you were trying to balance work and non-work?
10. Do you have any habits or characteristics that help you balance work and non-work?
11. Do you have any that make it more difficult?
12. Do you have any overarching rules or principles about balancing work and non-work?
13. Have you made any long-term decisions that enable you to balance work and non-work life? (for example, hiring a nanny, postponing starting a family, reducing hours)
14. Is there anything that you do in order to prevent the conflict or tension between work and non-work life from arising?
15. Did the way you are balancing work and non-work change over time? (approach or ability?)
16. Imagine that I'm in this year's entering class of attorneys at the firm and I ask you for advice about how I should balance work and nonwork here. What would you tell me?

[a] Interviews were semistructured. I asked the questions listed here of most interviewees and added other questions to explore interesting themes.

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