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Daily Engagement and Productivity: The Importance of the Speed of Engagement

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People often drag their feet getting started at work each morning, with a rather unclear sense of the implications on their daily productivity. Drawing on boundary transitions theory as a conceptual lens, we introduce and investigate the concept of the speed of engagement—the quickness with which an employee becomes focused and energized upon beginning work. We explore the productivity implications of this phenomenon, as well as the psychological processes people use to capitalize on a quick transition to work. Two experience sampling field studies—one of which featured a within-person field experiment testing the efficacy of two interventions we designed for use on employees' smartphones—support our theorizing. Our findings highlight the importance of the speed of engagement—over and above the level of engagement—for daily productivity levels. They also reveal that simple proactive steps to psychologically disengage from home or reattach to work increase the speed of engagement and lead to more productive days at work.

Keywords: employee engagement, speed of engagement, employee productivity, experience sampling methodology, field experiment

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A fundamental workplace goal is productivity—for employees to attain their goals and maximize output. The more productive employees are each day, the greater the cumulative effect on not only their overall performance, but also an organization's broader success. Employee engagement—the extent to which employees invest their complete selves in a role (Kahn, 1990)—is perhaps the best, most proximal predictor of employee productivity. The more employees invest themselves in a given day, the better their work product (e.g., Parke et al., 2018). Thus, managers and practitioners, alike, have been intently focused on answering the question: how do we best maximize and capitalize on employee engagement? Research on employee engagement has provided insight to this question by examining the *level* of engagement employees experience in a particular day, speaking to both factors that predict an employee's average engagement on that day and how the extent of employees' daily engagement impacts productivity-relevant behaviors (e.g., Parke et al., 2018; Vogel et al., 2020).

Despite the predictive benefits of this approach, the old adage that “the early bird catches the worm” hints that there may be more to the engagement-productivity story—specifically, the *quickness* with which someone becomes engaged in their daily tasks. As the adage suggests, we are taught from a young age that it is best to tackle our most important work first thing in the morning. The popular press routinely claims that productive employees develop good morning

work habits (e.g., Liu, 2016; Purbasari Horton, 2019; Vetter, 2018). And, research suggests that people have their greatest capacity and intrinsic motivation for the first task on their list (Sonnentag & Kühnel, 2016; Stone et al., 2006).

Yet, people do not always get right down to work each day. Rather than hurriedly focusing on job tasks, it is not uncommon for employees to linger in the break room over coffee in the morning with coworkers or for people to take their time reading online news and sports updates when they first settle at their desks. Indeed, there is likely wide variance among employees regarding how quickly they get down to work after their workday has begun (Buehler et al., 1994; Vetter, 2018; Wilson & Gilbert, 2003).

To examine this possibility and its potential implications for employees and their organizations, we introduce the concept of the *speed of engagement*, which we define as how quickly an employee becomes energized and cognitively focused after beginning work. From a conceptual perspective, boundary theory (Ashforth et al., 2000)—which is concerned with the transitions people make between various domains of their lives (e.g., work, home)—may provide useful insights into the “ramping up” of daily work efforts captured in the speed of engagement. In particular, boundary theory suggests that an effective and efficient role transition is a function of two interrelated processes: *exit* from one role and *entry* to the other (Ashforth et al., 2000). Given that maximal attention and effort can be allocated toward only a single role (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Kanfer & Ackerman, 1989), it is likely that employees who better navigate the psychological exit from their home/off-the-job role and the psychological entry into their work role can more quickly engage themselves in their work and make greater progress toward their daily work goals.

In this paper, we explore the nature of the speed of engagement construct by unpacking insights from boundary theory (Ashforth et al., 2000) and integrating them with the literature on work

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engagement. After developing arguments about why the speed of engagement is an important contributor to explaining variance in daily productivity, we model a set of antecedents that help to explain differences in an employee's speed of engagement from one day to the next. Ashforth et al.'s (2000) role exit process is reflected in *psychological detachment from home*, a temporary state of mental separation from one's family/nonwork role; likewise, we capture the role entry process in *morning work reattachment*, the process of rebuilding a mental connection with one's work (Sonnentag & Kühnel, 2016; Sonnentag et al., 2020). We test our predictions and model across two studies. The first is a 10-day experience sampling study of employees from a variety of jobs and industries. Next, we build on our findings by developing and testing the efficacy of two interventions aimed at boosting the speed of engagement for an employee on a given day. In a 15-day within-person field experiment of employees at a large multinational software company, we find support for the effectiveness of these interventions, demonstrating that when employees take simple steps to cognitively partition nonwork matters (i.e., detach from home) or cognitively embrace work matters (i.e., reattach to work), they achieve greater speed of engagement and, consequently, make greater progress toward work goals that day. Our conceptual model appears in Figure 1.

Our study aims to make several contributions to the literature. First, our manuscript extends the literature on daily work engagement by considering the idea that how quickly engagement occurs may be an important explanatory mechanism for employees' daily productivity, over and above how much engagement an employee achieves. Second, our research contributes to boundary theory (Ashforth et al., 2000) by testing several of its fundamental tenets. We directly operationalize the role exit and role entry processes associated with the home-to-work transition, and model the speed of engagement as the proximal outcome of a successful transition. We further extend the theory by demonstrating its overall importance for effective workplace functioning (i.e., goal progress). Finally, we offer theoretically informed prescriptions for employees and organizations interested in improving the speed at which employees become engaged in

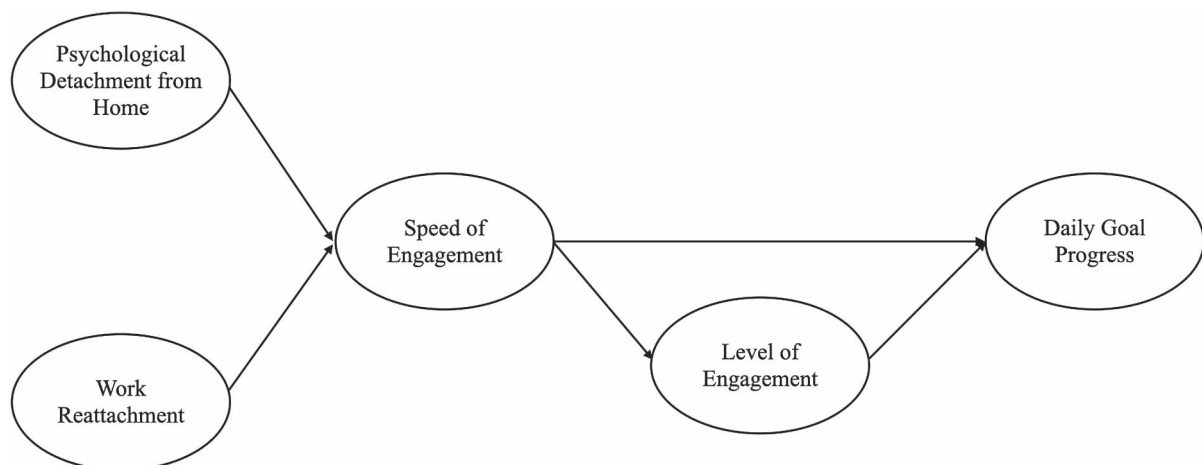
their day. In doing so, we contribute to the growing number of studies building knowledge about quick yet effective ways to enhance employees' daily engagement and work performance (e.g., Lanaj et al., 2019; Song et al., 2018).

The Speed of Engagement Defined

Kahn (1990) developed the concept of engagement to explain differences in the degree of psychological presence an individual brings to a given role. When employees are engaged, they are applying their best selves to their work role, simultaneously investing physical, cognitive, and emotional energies into work (Kahn, 1992). Engaged employees can be described as fully attentive toward their work, focused on the task at hand, and emotionally connected to their work and, if applicable, to others (Kahn, 1992). Thus, in addition to the physical presence necessary to perform one's work, engagement manifests as the extent to which an individual is immersed in their work at a given time. Given this conceptualization, engagement might best be labeled *level of engagement*, as it reflects the magnitude of one's investment over a specified period. Over the past decade, research has demonstrated that the extent of one's engagement is a particularly significant proximal driver of employee productivity (e.g., Christian et al., 2011; Parke et al., 2018; Rich et al., 2010).

Building on Kahn's (1990, 1992) theoretical conceptualization of engagement, the speed of engagement then reflects how quickly an individual becomes immersed—energized and focused—in tasks upon beginning work. Similar to psychological engagement, it also reflects a cognitive and affective experience of employees. From a cognitive perspective, a high speed of engagement means that an employee is quickly able to concentrate and focus attention on work duties, while a low speed of engagement reflects some distraction—either internal or external to the employee—that impedes jumping into one's work. From an affective perspective, the speed of engagement refers to how quickly the employee is able to become excited and energetic about the work s/he is performing that day. At a high speed of engagement, employees are quickly able to become enthusiastic about the workday, while at a low speed of engagement,

Figure 1
Theoretical Model of Speed of Engagement



employees are slower to become able to expend energy toward work tasks.

Our definition of the speed of engagement warrants particular attention to the distinction between the level of engagement and the speed (or velocity) at which an employee becomes engaged. The level of engagement concerns the amount—or some threshold—of personal resources being invested in one's role at a given time. In contrast, the speed of engagement is best thought of as how quickly that threshold is achieved. Our treatment of the distinctiveness of the level and speed of engagement is consistent with the treatment of other similar constructs in the organizational literature. For example, research has shown the importance of differentiating the amount of goal accomplishment and the rate at which those goals are accomplished (Carver & Scheier, 1998; Johnson et al., 2012). Similarly, the level of procedural justice enacted and the timeliness with which those procedures were started and completed (Outlaw et al., 2019) uniquely contribute to understanding reactions to fairness.

Our definition also highlights the importance of becoming quickly engaged after some period of not working. There are many such instances over the course of an employee's workday, such as after a regular break (e.g., lunch; Trougakos et al., 2014), interruption from a coworker (Puranik et al., 2020), or even upon returning to one's office after a group meeting. Perhaps the most salient and consistent beginning for all employees, though, is that in the morning at the start of the workday. Thus, and because our overall research question concerns the morning transition from home to work, we focus on the speed of engagement achieved by employees at the start of the workday.

Theoretical Development

Research on role boundaries and transitions between roles (Ashforth et al., 2000) offers theoretical insight about why and how speed of engagement is relevant to employees' daily productivity. Labeling something as a role is a cognitive device used to create boundaries around a set of interrelated matters and distinguish it from other less related sets of matters, thereby helping to maintain a sense of order and organization in an individual's life (Katz & Kahn, 1978). It "results in the creation of slices of reality—domains—that have particular meaning for the individual(s) creating and maintaining the boundaries" (Ashforth et al., 2000, p. 474). For example, in addition to the broader role of employee—which, itself, may subsume a number of simultaneously held subroles, such as that of supervisor (to direct reports), subordinate (to a senior manager), and team member (of a committee)—an individual may also hold roles outside of work, such as those associated with being spouse, parent, friend, volunteer, or church member. Perhaps the most salient boundary that exists for employees, though, is between the work and nonwork/family roles (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Olson-Buchanan & Boswell, 2006).

Boundary theory (Nippert-Eng, 1996; Van Maanen, 1982) and its corollary, boundary transition theory (Ashforth et al., 2000), are concerned with the transitions that people make between the work and nonwork domains each day. Even absent geographic relocation (e.g., for remote workers), crossing the boundary between home and work involves a transition, particularly in the psychological and identity-related requirements (e.g., values, beliefs, norms, behaviors) of the respective roles. Ashforth et al. (2000) explain

that psychological movement between two roles involves both *role exit*—the process of psychological separation from one role—and *role entry*—the process of becoming psychologically involved with another role.

Engagement in a particular role inherently involves a resource investment—particularly the investment of a person's attention, focus, and emotional energy (Kahn, 1992). Yet, at any given point in time, an individual's capacity to invest these resources is finite (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). Accordingly, it is quite difficult—if not impossible—to be fully engaged in one role and simultaneously even partially engaged in another role (e.g., Beal et al., 2005; Kanfer & Ackerman, 1989). Indeed, Shin and Grant (2019) recently demonstrated that people even have trouble fully investing themselves into a second task within the same role. Thus, according to boundary transition theory, the success of the morning transition into work is indicated in both its *effectiveness* in reducing the level of engagement outside of work and increasing the level of engagement at work, and *efficiency*, in terms of how quickly that effective transition occurs (i.e., increasing the speed of engagement).

Ultimately, if a transition to work is successful, then it is likely to contribute to a person's productivity during the day, which in a corporate setting, translates to the extent of progress made toward important work goals. When the speed of engagement is high, an employee may be able to make greater progress toward important work goals that day. Aside from having more time to accomplish work, there are several other reasons why this might be the case. Because engagement generally decreases over the workday (Sonnetag & Kühnel, 2016), quickly becoming engaged in the morning can help take advantage of time when stronger investments of personal resources that contribute to goal accomplishment are naturally made (e.g., Kouchaki & Smith, 2014; Stone et al., 2006). Moreover, work patterns established at the beginning of the workday may provide a behavioral prime (e.g., Rothbard & Wilk, 2011), and set the stage for deeper engagement throughout the day. This suggests that when employees are able to achieve a high speed of engagement, they can attain higher levels of engagement during the day, which ultimately contributes to a more productive day (i.e., more goal progress).

Hypothesis 1: The speed of morning engagement will be indirectly related to daily goal progress through its effect on level of engagement.

Speed of Engagement: The Importance of Transitioning Away From Home

Assuming that speed of engagement improves daily productivity, it is important to understand how or when employees are most capable of quickly immersing themselves into their work in the morning. Based in theorizing on role boundaries and transitions (Ashforth et al., 2000), we anticipate that there are two simultaneous processes that are relevant to employees' speed of engagement: the transition *away* from the roles people hold at home and the transition *toward* the roles people hold at work. In this section, we begin by exploring the process of transitioning away from home.

From a boundary transitions perspective (Ashforth et al., 2000), immersing oneself in a given role is facilitated by the effective navigation of the role exit process, or the extent to which the employee has disengaged from prior roles involving the energy

and attention of the individual. Thus, for employees to be able to quickly immerse themselves into work tasks, it is critical that they reduce energy and attention being given to nonwork matters. Psychological detachment, which describes a temporary state of mental disengagement from a given role (Etzion et al., 1998; Sonnentag, 2012), may facilitate this transition. Typically, organizational researchers have concerned themselves with employees' detachment from work, and how differences in this factor explain differences in functioning at home (e.g., Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007). However, underlying the logic of this construct is simply that it allows people to detach from one role to achieve better effectiveness in another role. Thus, it is possible that achieving *psychological detachment from home* may allow for better functioning at work (e.g., Sanz-Vergel et al., 2011).

When employees detach from nonwork matters, they do not allow thoughts and feelings related to off-the-job issues to interfere with emotional and cognitive functioning in the work domain (e.g., Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007, 2015). Without such detachment, people are more likely to ruminate on unfinished matters from home when they begin work (e.g., Leroy, 2009; Syrek & Antoni, 2014). Indeed, research suggests that outside matters that have not been properly disposed consume cognitive resources as the mind scans for opportunities to complete these tasks (Moskowitz, 2002; Zeigarnik, 1938). Consider an example from the transition at the end of the workday, that from work to home. Leaving work with incomplete or stressful tasks on one's to-do list leads employees to ruminate on these matters when they are at home, negatively affecting their ability to relax and recover (Syrek et al., 2017). In contrast, when employees switch off from their work role in the evening, they are better able to relax and enjoy their leisure time, reduce strain associated with daily stress, sleep longer and more restfully, and achieve greater productivity upon return to work the next day (Fritz & Crain, 2016; Fritz et al., 2010; Hülshager et al., 2014).

Likewise, it is reasonable to expect that when employees mentally disconnect from or cognitively partition nonwork matters, they may be better able to quickly reap the benefits associated with full psychological presence at work. Just as detaching from the workplace at the end of the day allows employees to quickly embrace important family concerns (Demerouti et al., 2012), we anticipate that the more employees detach from concerns involving home or the nonwork domain, the more quickly they will be able to navigate the transition to work and achieve higher speed of engagement. Accordingly, more quickly engaging at work in the morning is likely to explain why employees demonstrate better performance on days when they are more detached from home (e.g., Carlson & Frone, 2003; Sanz-Vergel et al., 2011).

Hypothesis 2: Psychological detachment from home will be positively related to the speed of engagement.

Hypothesis 3: The relationship between psychological detachment from home and daily goal progress will be serially mediated by the speed of engagement and level of engagement.

Speed of Engagement: The Importance of Transitioning Toward Work

The second transition process relevant to speed of engagement involves employees' transitions *toward* their work each day.

Following a role transitions perspective (Ashforth et al., 2000), in order to quickly invest oneself in work tasks, employees need not only to separate from their prior roles (i.e., role exit)—in this case their home/nonwork lives—but also to be ready and available to give themselves over to a new role (i.e., role entry). In particular, Ashforth et al. (2000) theorized that this sort of psychological preparation likely involves some combination of attention and arousal.

A recent line of research on work reattachment—the process of rebuilding a mental connection with one's work (Sonnentag & Kühnel, 2016; Sonnentag et al., 2020)—suggests that anticipatory tactics used prior to arriving at work to prepare for the day ahead serve to mobilize personal energies and direct attention toward work. These tactics, such as thinking about tasks that need to be accomplished that day or anticipating significant hurdles that might be encountered (Sonnentag & Kühnel, 2016), promote greater mental involvement in the domain into which the individual is entering (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2015) and help to activate work goals (Sonnentag et al., 2020). Sonnentag and Kühnel (2016) emphasize that reattachment necessarily takes place *prior* to work commencing, which is part of what distinguishes it from both the level and the speed of engagement (i.e., the effectiveness and efficiency of the reattachment process).

Although work reattachment is known to benefit average levels of work engagement throughout the day (Sonnentag & Kühnel, 2016), it is also likely to be a particularly important ingredient for achieving a quick speed of engagement first thing in the morning. The specificity inherent in thinking about reattachment—that it involves preparations regarding work tasks that will be tackled *that day* (Sonnentag & Kühnel, 2016)—helps to promote the efficient execution of such tasks (Gollwitzer, 1993, 1999) when the employee arrives at the workplace or becomes ready to begin work. As such, we anticipate that the more employees engage in work reattachment efforts in the morning, the more they will achieve a higher speed of engagement. Indeed, having a plan for the upcoming day of work can help employees to overcome distractions that might otherwise divert resources away from becoming immersed in one's work (Gollwitzer, 1999). Subsequently, one of the reasons why those who reattach to work in the morning achieve greater daily performance (e.g., Sonnentag & Kühnel, 2016) is that they are more likely to engage quickly in their work.

Hypothesis 4: Morning work reattachment will be positively related to the speed of engagement.

Hypothesis 5: The relationship between morning work reattachment from home and daily goal progress will be serially mediated by the speed of engagement and level of engagement.

Study 1 Method

Transparency and Openness

We describe our sampling plan, all data exclusions, all manipulations, and all measures in both studies, and we adhered to the Journal of Applied Psychology methodological checklist. Data are not available due to their proprietary nature. Data were analyzed using Mplus, version 8.3 (Muthén & Muthén, 2017). Analysis code is provided in an online appendix. The study design, hypotheses,

and analyses were not preregistered because the data were collected for an applied project.

Sample and Procedure

To test our hypotheses and overall model, we conducted an experience sampling methodology (ESM) study, with data collected from employees from a variety of jobs and industries over the course of 10 consecutive workdays. Invitations to participate in the study were sent to working individuals in our adult research pool who were initially recruited with a series of online advertisements (e.g., Craigslist, Facebook). In exchange for their participation, employees were paid \$1 for each completed survey (up to 4 per day), and a \$20 bonus if they completed 10 full days of surveys. Employees completed an initial registration survey, which asked about their demographics, personality characteristics, and other individual differences, and their preferred times for receiving the daily surveys. To allow for differences in work schedules across time zones and between people, each of the four surveys was programmed to arrive in employees' inboxes at the exact time requested by each employee (Gabriel et al., 2019). Shortly before starting work each day, employees completed the first survey of the day (T1), which asked questions about their morning reattachment, along with controls for state affect and stress. The second survey (T2) was completed approximately 2 hr after they started work and assessed their psychological detachment from home and speed of engagement, along with controls for state affect, stress, and goal progress. Although it may be unconventional to assess the antecedents contained in one's model at different times, we included the psychological detachment from home variable on the T2 survey—and not on the T1 survey—because employees are not likely to detach from home when they are still at home. We reasoned that this variable must be assessed after the employee gets to work. The third survey (T3), which was completed shortly before they were scheduled to end work for the day, assessed employees' level of engagement, along with controls for state affect and stress. The fourth survey (T4), which was completed in the evening before going to bed, captured employees' daily goal progress. Employees were requested to complete each survey within 90 min of receiving it. On average, the T1 survey was completed at 8:14 a.m. (min = 5:01 a.m.; max = 11:49 a.m.), T2 at 10:25 a.m. (min = 8:30 a.m.; max = 12:51 p.m.), T3 at 5:22 p.m. (min = 3:30 p.m.; max = 7:59 p.m.), and T4 at 7:39 p.m. (min = 7:03 p.m.; max = 12:57 a.m.).

After matching complete responses across the four surveys, 135 employees provided 1,088 complete daily observations (i.e., a complete daily observation consisted of completed responses for all four surveys for that day; 80.6% day-level response rate). We removed survey responses when employees completed a survey more than 90 min after the time that they had requested to receive it. Further, we removed the observations of eight employees who provided fewer than three complete daily observations across the 10 days. The results held even when these observations were retained. The final sample for analysis was 885 observations from 123 employees (an average of 7.2 observations per employee). The final sample was 59.3% female, and 74.0% White/Caucasian (10.6% Black, 12.2% Asian). 57.7% were currently married (35.0% were currently single), and 86.2% had a Bachelor's degree. All participants worked full-time; 48% were in a management role, and

the industries most represented were education/training, healthcare, and finance/insurance/real estate. On average, participants were 38.6 years old ($SD = 9.0$) and had worked for their organizations for 6.5 years ($SD = 5.5$). We also captured where participants were working each day of the study (i.e., home, office, other). Of the 885 employee-days included in the analyses, 514 (58.1%) occurred when the employee was working at home, and 352 (39.8%) occurred when the employee was working from the office. This study was approved by the Temple University IRB (Study 27947).

Measures

Unless otherwise noted, all measures were assessed on a five-item scale ranging from 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 5 = *Strongly Agree*. All items are shown in Appendix B.

Psychological Detachment From Home

Psychological detachment from home was measured with three items adapted from Sonnentag and Fritz (2007). Employees were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed they had detached from family/off-the-job concerns *thus far today at work*. The items were, "I have been able to forget about family/off-the-job concerns," "I have not thought about family/off-the-job concerns at all," and "I have gotten a break from my family/off-the-job concerns." We assessed reliability with the composite reliability index (α) at both the within-individual ($\alpha-w$) and between-individual ($\alpha-b$) levels of analysis (Gabriel et al., 2019; Geldhof et al., 2014, $\alpha-w = .95$; $\alpha-b = .99$).

Morning Work Reattachment

We assessed morning work reattachment with the five-item measure by Sonnentag and her colleagues (Sonnentag & Kühnel, 2016; Sonnentag et al., 2020). We asked employees to indicate the extent to which they agreed they had reattached to their jobs *thus far that morning*. Sample items were, "I have been thinking about what I want to achieve at work today," and "I have been giving some thought to the upcoming workday." ($\alpha-w = .96$; $\alpha-b = .99$).

Speed of Engagement

To assess the speed of engagement, we adapted items used to measure the level of engagement (Rich et al., 2010; see also Parke et al., 2018) to specifically refer to the speed with which the employee became engaged in his/her work earlier that morning. Employees were asked to answer the items considering the time period between when they started work that day and the point at which they were answering the mid-morning (T2) survey. The resulting items were: "This morning, I quickly felt energetic at the start of my work day," "This morning, I quickly became focused about my work," and "This morning, I quickly became immersed in my work."

We tested for the content validity and distinctiveness of this measure from the level of work engagement in a 3-day pilot ESM study of 100 employees from the company described in Study 2; 99 employees returned a total of 276 surveys. Employees were asked to complete a survey around their lunchtime each day for three consecutive workdays. On that survey, the three speed of

engagement items and three level of work engagement items (“I feel energetic at my job today,” “I am very focused on my job today,” and “I am devoting a lot of energy to my job right now”) were counterbalanced to avoid ordering effects. Following Scott et al. (2010), we group-mean centered the items, and we allowed the residuals of items with overlapping content (i.e., speed of engagement #1 and level of engagement #1; speed #2 and level #2) to covary (e.g., Cole et al., 2007). Results of a multilevel (ML-) confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) showed a better fit to the data of the two-factor model, $\chi^2_{(6)} = 10.74$, $p < .001$, comparative fit index (CFI) = .98, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .05, standardized root mean square residual (SRMR_{within}) = .05, than the one-factor model, $\chi^2_{(7)} = 92.67$, $p < .001$, CFI = .65, RMSEA = .21, SRMR_{within} = .16, $\Delta\chi^2_{(1)} = 81.93$, $p < .001$. Reliabilities for the Study 1 scales were acceptable ($\alpha-w = .93$; $\alpha-b = .98$).

Level of Engagement

We used three items adapted from Rich et al. (2010) to assess employees' level of engagement. Employees were asked to indicate how engaged they had been since completing the mid-morning survey. The items were, “I have felt energetic at my job,” “I have been very focused on my job,” and “I have devoted a lot of energy to my job” ($\alpha-w = .92$; $\alpha-b = .98$).

Daily Goal Progress

Our measure of daily goal progress assessed progress in a broad sense, following other similar studies that have used samples of employees from a variety of job functions (e.g., Koopman et al., 2016; Schlipzand et al., 2018). We used three items adapted to refer to the entire workday (Trougakos et al., 2015; Wanberg et al., 2010): “I made good progress on my work goals,” “At work, I was productive,” and “I fulfilled my roles and responsibilities more effectively than I typically do” ($\alpha-w = .95$; $\alpha-b = .99$).

Control Variables

When employing ESM, it is important to rule out several alternative explanations for the hypothesized effects of the model. For example, individuals' daily states (e.g., energy, engagement) may naturally fluctuate over the course of a day or week. Thus, it is customary to account for the possibility of linear and cyclical trends in the outcome variables by controlling for the day of the week (i.e., to account for linear growth), as well as the sine and cosine of the day of the week with the period equal to one work week (i.e., to account for cyclical trends; Gabriel et al., 2019). Accordingly, we entered these three control variables into the equations predicting our outcome variables (i.e., speed of engagement, level of engagement, daily goal progress).

In each of the first three surveys of the day, we collected measures of momentary positive affect, negative affect, and stress. Reports of engagement and goal progress may be influenced by momentary affective and cognitive factors (Gabriel et al., 2019); we controlled for these factors by including them in the path analytic equations predicting a variable on that survey or later (e.g., in predicting speed of engagement at T2, we controlled for T1 and T2 positive affect, negative affect, and stress). This also allowed us to control for the

possibility that a common method biased the parameters among the variables of our model (Gabriel et al., 2019). Following Liu et al. (2017), we used three items each to assess positive affect (i.e., delighted, excited, happy) and negative affect (i.e., distressed, angry, sad). We assessed employees' stress with three items (e.g., “I am feeling a great deal of stress right now”) adapted to capture momentary stress (Beal et al., 2013; Motowidlo et al., 1986).

Finally, to make a stronger case about the causal ordering among variables, ESM researchers often attempt to capture criterion variables in terms of what has occurred specifically since the previous survey. For example, to strengthen the case that when an employee engages in more citizenship behavior earlier in the day, they are subsequently likely to make greater progress toward work goals, Koopman et al. (2016) asked participants to report about their work goal progress since they completed the last survey (i.e., when citizenship behavior was assessed). Although our theorizing about the importance of the speed of engagement for daily goal progress concerns progress that is made throughout the entire day, we wanted to demonstrate that our model could also explain variance in goal progress that occurred specifically after the T2 survey, when the speed of engagement was assessed. Thus, in the equation predicting T4 goal progress, we also controlled for an identical measure of goal progress, which was assessed on the T2 survey. For these items, employees were asked to report the extent to which they had made progress on their work goals thus far that day.

Analytical Strategy

Because the data were daily observations nested within participants, we analyzed our hypotheses and overall model within a multilevel (ML) path analytic framework using Mplus 8.3 (Muthén & Muthén, 2017). To ensure multilevel analyses were appropriate, we computed the proportion of within-individual (i.e., daily) variance in each of our variables. All of the variables exhibited sufficient variance at the within-individual level (56.5 percent for psychological detachment from home, 56.3 percent for morning work reattachment, 64.2 percent for speed of engagement, 65.1 percent for level of engagement, and 69.5 percent for daily goal progress).

To investigate the distinctiveness of the variables, we conducted a series of ML-CFA. We allowed the error terms of identical items assessed at different times to covary (Cole et al., 2007). Results showed that our hypothesized, 15-factor measurement model showed good fit to the data, $\chi^2_{(899)} = 1301.11$, $p < .001$, CFI = .97, RMSEA = .02, SRMR_{within} = .04. Furthermore, it was a significantly better fit than the alternative models we estimated, including a 14-factor model in which the speed of engagement and psychological detachment from home items were specified to load onto a single factor, $\chi^2_{(913)} = 2488.62$, $p < .001$, CFI = .90, RMSEA = .04, SRMR_{within} = .06, $S-B\Delta\chi^2_{(14)} = 1004.00$, $p < .001$, a 14-factor model in which the speed of engagement and morning work reattachment items were specified to load onto a single factor, $\chi^2_{(913)} = 2292.65$, $p < .001$, CFI = .91, RMSEA = .04, SRMR_{within} = .06, $S-B\Delta\chi^2_{(14)} = 835.48$, $p < .001$, a 14-factor model in which the speed of engagement and level of engagement items were specified to load onto a single factor, $\chi^2_{(913)} = 2068.76$, $p < .001$, CFI = .92, RMSEA = .04, SRMR_{within} = .05, $S-B\Delta\chi^2_{(14)} = 716.30$, $p < .001$, and a 14-factor model in which the speed of engagement and daily goal progress items were specified to load onto a single factor, $\chi^2_{(913)} = 2226.73$,

$p < .001$, CFI = .91, RMSEA = .04, SRMR_(within) = .05, $S-B\Delta\chi^2_{(14)} = 823.06$, $p < .001$.

Prior to the analyses, we group-mean centered the predictors (Enders & Tofighi, 2007). All paths were modeled as random slopes (e.g., Lin et al., 2020). Indirect effects were tested with the bias-corrected parametric bootstrap produced with a Monte Carlo procedure using 20,000 replications (Preacher et al., 2010; Selig & Preacher, 2008). Variance explained in the dependent variables was estimated with pseudo- R^2 (Snijders & Bosker, 1999).

Study 1 Results

Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations, and correlations among the Study 1 variables. Table 2 shows the results of the multilevel path analyses. *Hypothesis 1* predicted that the speed of engagement would be indirectly related to daily goal progress, through its effects on the level of engagement. The direct effect of the speed of engagement on the level of engagement was significant ($\gamma = .27$, $p < .001$), as was the direct effect of the level of engagement on daily goal progress ($\gamma = .40$, $p < .001$). After controlling for the direct effect of the speed of engagement on daily goal progress ($\gamma = .07$, $p = .043$), the indirect effect of the speed of engagement via the level of engagement was positive, $\rho = .11$, 95% CI = [.0680, .1504], supporting *Hypothesis 1*.

Hypothesis 2 predicted psychological detachment from home would be positively related to the speed of engagement. The direct effect of psychological detachment from home on the speed of engagement was positive ($\gamma = .10$, $p = .011$), supporting *Hypothesis 2*.

Hypothesis 3 predicted the speed of engagement and the level of engagement would serially mediate the relationship between psychological detachment from home and daily goal progress. Combining the direct effect from *Hypothesis 2* with the indirect effect from *Hypothesis 1*, the indirect effect of psychological detachment from home on daily goal progress via the speed of engagement and level of engagement was significant, $\rho = .01$, 95% CI = [.0014, .0202], supporting *Hypothesis 3*.

Hypothesis 4 predicted that morning work reattachment would be positively related to the speed of engagement. The direct effect of morning work reattachment on the speed of engagement was positive ($\gamma = .24$, $p < .001$), supporting *Hypothesis 4*.

Hypothesis 5 predicted the speed of engagement and the level of engagement would serially mediate the relationship between morning work reattachment and daily goal progress. Combining the direct effect of *Hypothesis 4* with the indirect effect of *Hypothesis 1*, the indirect effect of morning work reattachment on daily goal progress via the speed of engagement and the level of engagement was significant, $\rho = .03$, 95% CI = [.0111, .0403], supporting *Hypothesis 5*.

Study 1 Discussion

In Study 1, we found support for our hypotheses and overall model. Our results demonstrated that psychological detachment from home and morning work reattachment both positively influenced the speed of engagement, which subsequently predicted daily goal progress through its effect on the level of engagement. Our study design had numerous strengths, including our collection of data from employees at four times per day.

A limitation to Study 1 concerns our assessment of the level of engagement at T3. We believe this was an appropriate time to capture employees' reports of daily engagement, and we purposefully did not assess engagement at T2 to maintain the distinction between the speed and level of engagement. Moreover, capturing engagement at the end of the workday is consistent with other research on daily engagement (e.g., Parke et al., 2018). It is possible, though, that employees' level of engagement prior to the T2 survey (when the speed of engagement was assessed) disproportionately influenced the T3 ratings. Thus, in Study 2, we controlled for employees' reports of engagement at T2.

Another limitation was that the speed of engagement was assessed at the same time as psychological detachment from home. To be sure, we reasoned that the psychological detachment from home variable must be assessed after the employee gets to work, rather than when they are at home. It is difficult for us to make causal inferences about this relationship, though, given that it is also possible that when employees more quickly immerse themselves in their work, they are then more likely to detach from home concerns. Therefore, in Study 2, we address this limitation by investigating the efficacy of an intervention specifically designed to indirectly bolster the speed of engagement through its effects on psychological detachment from home. This was one of two interventions we counterbalanced in a within-person field experiment. The interventions appeared as the final task in the T1 survey, prior to employees beginning work for the day, and, thus, prior to the speed of engagement occurring. Should the psychological detachment intervention have direct effects on the speed of engagement, there would be greater evidence for the internal validity of the relationship between psychological detachment from home and the speed of engagement. In the following section, we outline the conceptual rationale for the interventions we designed and administered to employees in Study 2.

Study 2

Increasing the Speed of Engagement via Intervention

In describing role transitions, Ashforth et al. (2000) theorized about the importance of, what they labeled, rites of passage, as people attempt to cross boundaries between two roles in their lives. Essentially, rites of passage involve actions that people undertake as part of their transition to help ease out of one role (role exit) or into another (role entry). These rituals may be triggered by external (e.g., time on the clock) or internal (e.g., exhaustion or guilt) cues, and might help to either push an individual out of a role or pull an individual into a role. Although Ashforth et al. (2000) examples are not necessarily conscious actions to facilitate a given transition, the same rationale should apply to purposeful rites, such as daily interventions. Accordingly, in this study, we sought to develop and test two daily interventions that could act as rites of passage that enable people to transition more smoothly to work each morning with the goal of facilitating their speed of engagement.

The Home Detachment Intervention

Recall that a primary concern associated with boundary transition is that unfinished matters in one domain can consume resources

Table 1
Study 1 Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Among the Variables

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD_w</i>	<i>SD_b</i>	ω - <i>b</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Psychological detachment from home	3.08	.79	.69	.99	(.95)	.00	.31*	.27*	.22*	.16*	-.22*	-.23*
2. Morning work reattachment	3.49	.71	.62	.99	.06	(.96)	.48*	.54*	.32*	.31*	-.15	-.11
3. Speed of engagement	3.52	.70	.52	.98	.18*	.29*	(.93)	.76*	.55*	.44*	-.19*	-.21*
4. Level of engagement	3.58	.65	.48	.98	.12*	.16*	.27*	(.92)	.79*	.60*	-.32*	-.22*
5. Daily goal progress	3.73	.61	.40	.99	.07*	.19*	.32*	.54*	(.95)	.61*	-.24*	-.23*
Measured control variables												
6. T1 positive affect	2.11	.63	.84	.99	.02	.11*	.21*	.08*	.11*	(.94)	-.05	-.44*
7. T1 negative affect	1.39	.41	.38	.98	-.07*	-.04*	-.14*	-.05	-.08*	-.29*	(.94)	.60*
8. T1 stress	2.31	.73	.73	.96	-.13*	.03	-.13*	-.05	-.06	-.40*	.55*	(.94)
9. T2 positive affect	2.07	.58	.79	.99	.16*	.11*	.23*	.15*	.14*	.45*	-.11*	-.23*
10. T2 negative affect	1.43	.43	.39	.98	-.16*	-.05	-.15*	-.11*	-.14*	-.18*	.39*	.33*
11. T2 stress	2.41	.73	.77	.98	-.19*	.02	-.16*	-.04*	-.06	-.28*	.28*	.48*
12. T2 goal progress	3.64	.65	.43	.99	.17*	.24*	.50*	.35*	.36*	.15*	-.12*	-.10*
13. T3 positive affect	2.21	.68	.77	.99	.03	.06	.09*	.16*	.18*	.33*	-.11*	-.14*
14. T3 negative affect	1.45	.49	.38	.98	-.15*	.00	-.10*	-.13*	-.16*	-.13*	.26*	.20*
15. T3 stress	2.49	.80	.74	.98	-.15*	-.05	-.13*	-.11*	-.14*	-.22*	.25*	.29*
Other control variables												
16. Day of week ^a	2.98	1.41	—	—	.00	-.09	.01	-.00	-.02	-.03	-.01	-.04
17. Sine	.16	.74	—	—	-.01	.07	.01	.02	.03	.01	.01	.04
18. Cosine	-.32	.57	—	—	.03	.07	-.00	-.02	.02	.09*	-.04	.02
Demographic variables												
19. Gender ^b	1.59	—	.49	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
20. Age	38.63	—	8.92	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
21. Job tenure	6.52	—	5.48	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
22. Race ^c	.26	—	.44	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Variable	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
1. Psychological detachment from home	.22*	-.17	-.24*	.16	.16	-.02	-.13	—	—	—	-.13	-.04	.11	-.14
2. Morning work reattachment	.24*	-.11	-.08	.32*	.28*	-.15	-.02	—	—	—	-.16	.18*	.22*	-.09
3. Speed of engagement	.39*	-.19*	-.21*	.77*	.30*	-.09	-.09	—	—	—	-.25*	.24*	.28*	-.06
4. Level of engagement	.57*	-.29*	-.22*	.63*	.55*	-.24*	-.15	—	—	—	-.33*	.05	.23*	.01
5. Daily goal progress	.53*	-.26*	-.21*	.79*	.53*	-.26*	-.23*	—	—	—	-.32*	.05	.19*	.11
Measured control variables														
6. T1 positive affect	.95*	-.10	-.47*	.58*	.89*	-.04	-.41*	—	—	—	-.28*	.08	.28*	.04
7. T1 negative affect	-.08	.97*	.63*	-.06	-.05	.91*	.53*	—	—	—	.14	-.14	-.08	.04
8. T1 stress	-.41*	.57*	.96*	-.14*	-.36*	.47*	.86*	—	—	—	.27*	-.21*	-.22*	.20*
9. T2 positive affect	(.94)	-.12	-.48*	.52*	.95*	-.07	-.45*	—	—	—	-.22*	-.01	.24*	-.05
10. T2 negative affect	-.32*	(.95)	.62*	-.14	-.08	.90*	.52*	—	—	—	.02	-.16	-.11	-.01
11. T2 stress	-.39*	.54*	(.94)	-.13	-.40*	.52*	.91*	—	—	—	.14	-.17	-.16	.18*
12. T2 goal progress	.17*	-.09*	-.08*	(.94)	.46*	-.05	-.07	—	—	—	-.25*	.11	.18*	.05
13. T3 positive affect	.32*	-.09*	-.15*	.03	(.94)	-.07	-.43*	—	—	—	-.22*	-.08	.21*	-.03
14. T3 negative affect	-.11*	.31*	.19*	-.05	-.36*	(.94)	.59*	—	—	—	.07	-.12	-.09	-.15
15. T3 stress	-.21*	.28*	.35*	-.07*	-.47*	.57*	(.93)	—	—	—	.17	-.16	-.18*	.10
Other control variables														
16. Day of week ^a	-.04	-.02	-.02	.04	.01	-.02	-.04	—	—	—	-.18*	.06	-.08	-.06
17. Sine	.03	.04	.03	-.04	-.04	.04	.05	-.98*	—	—	.16	-.06	.13	.09
18. Cosine	.08*	.01	-.04	-.06	.08*	-.02	-.03	-.62*	.38*	—	.38*	.28*	.10	.07
Demographic variables														
19. Gender ^b	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	.01	-.02	.08
20. Age	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	.48*	-.14
21. Job tenure	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	-.20*
22. Race ^c	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Note. $n = 885$ T1(early morning)–T2(mid-morning)–T3(afternoon)–T4(evening) matched observations nested within 123 employees. Correlations below the diagonal reflect values at the within-individual level of analysis (e.g., group-mean centered). Correlations above the diagonal reflect values at the between-individual level of analysis. Within-individual composite reliability (ω -*w*) estimates are in parentheses on the diagonal. Between-individual composite reliability (ω -*b*) estimates are listed next to the standard deviations. ^a Day of week coded 1–5 (Monday–Friday). ^b Gender coded 1 = male; 2 = female.

^c Race coded 0 = White; 1 = Non-white.

* $p < .05$.

needed for immediate functioning in the domain being entered (Moskowitz, 2002; Zeigarnik, 1938). In our case, unfinished tasks, projects, or conversations from home may draw attentional resources away from work matters (Leroy, 2009; Syrek & Antoni,

2014), thereby reducing the speed at which an employee can engage in their workday. Thus, employees who are able to dispose of home concerns—even temporarily—should be better able to channel their energies and resources toward work.

Table 2
Study 1 Results of Multilevel Path Analysis

Variable	Speed of engagement			Level of engagement			Daily goal progress		
	γ	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	γ	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	γ	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>
Intercept	3.29**	.22	15.21	2.52**	.33	7.66	1.51**	.25	6.11
Control variables									
Day of week	.13*	.06	2.24	.03	.07	.45	-.01	.06	-.18
Sine	.20*	.09	2.17	.08	.12	.65	-.00	.10	-.02
Cosine	.04	.06	.76	-.03	.07	-.39	.03	.06	.47
T1 positive affect	.10*	.04	2.41	-.08	.05	-1.66	-.02	.04	-.36
T1 negative affect	-.08	.07	-1.23	.08	.06	1.37	.05	.07	.77
T1 stress	-.01	.05	-.28	-.04	.04	-.94	-.02	.03	-.45
T2 positive affect	.14**	.04	3.36	.06	.05	1.16	-.02	.04	-.37
T2 negative affect	.03	.07	.35	-.06	.05	-1.04	-.10	.06	-1.60
T2 stress	-.06	.05	-1.26	.04	.04	1.06	.02	.03	.64
T3 positive affect				.11*	.05	2.23	.06	.04	1.53
T3 negative affect				-.05	.06	-.73	-.07	.06	-1.12
T3 stress				-.01	.04	-.34	-.03	.03	-.90
T2 goal progress							.18**	.04	4.17
Hypothesized predictors									
Psychological detachment from home	.10*	.04	2.55	.02	.04	.56	-.04	.03	-1.28
Morning work reattachment	.24**	.04	5.57	.07	.05	1.48	.04	.02	1.49
Speed of engagement				.27**	.04	6.45	.07*	.04	2.02
Level of engagement							.40**	.04	10.82
Pseudo- R^2		.12			.28			.52	

Note. $n = 885$ T1(early morning)–T2(mid-morning)–T3(afternoon)–T4(evening) matched observations nested within 123 employees. All hypothesized paths are estimated with random slopes. Table values are unstandardized coefficient and standard errors.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$, two-tailed.

Ashforth et al. (2000) theorized that rites of separation might help people to psychologically (and perhaps physically) disengage from a given role. This type of ritual offers momentum to help people overcome the inertia they would otherwise feel in their current role. At a very basic level, it may include a person's morning routine (e.g., shower, dressing, reading the paper) and their time spent commuting to work. Ashforth et al. (2000) further suggested that summarizing and recounting activities from a given role (e.g., home) may act as a ritualistic way to temporarily detach and transition away from that role. For example, an employee may develop a plan to address unfinished home concerns at a later time.

Research has shown that making formal plans to return to unfinished goals reduces the cognitive interference associated with those unfinished tasks and allows people to channel their cognitive resources toward matters at hand (Masicampo & Baumeister, 2011). Similar to the idea that writing down ruminating thoughts helps to assuage concerns that they will be forgotten overnight and, thus, allows for better sleep (Harvey & Farrell, 2003), explicitly documenting important unresolved home matters may increase confidence that those matters will not be forgotten during the day. In essence, the mind can better focus on what is in front of it when extraneous matters are parked somewhere safe and fewer resources are allocated to monitoring and processing those matters. Evidence from the end of the workday suggests that this can be an effective strategy. Smit and Barber (2016) found that employees who made a list of incomplete work tasks before leaving for the evening were better able to psychologically detach from work, confident that they could resume where they left off the next morning.

Our first intervention—which we call the *home detachment intervention*—involved asking employees to record their urgent

home and family concerns and explicitly discharge themselves from having to remember them. We anticipate that when employees document important home or family tasks in anticipation of returning to these tasks after working hours, the boost in psychological detachment from home will, in turn, foster greater speed of engagement, level of engagement, and daily productivity.

Hypothesis 6: On days when employees receive the home detachment intervention in the morning, they will report greater speed of engagement compared to days when they do not receive any intervention.

Hypothesis 7: Compared to the control condition, the home detachment intervention will increase daily goal progress via its effects on speed of engagement and level of engagement.

The Work Reattachment Intervention

Ashforth et al. (2000) also discussed how transitioning between roles might be facilitated by rites of incorporation. While this may include traditional physical entry type actions—exchanging morning pleasantries with coworkers or stopping at the same coffee shop on the way to work—it may also occur more cognitively as employees shift their attention to their upcoming work role. For example, even before they enter the workplace, employees may begin orienting their thoughts toward important tasks that need to be accomplished that day, helping to guide their cognitive resources and energies toward work (e.g., Sonnentag & Kühnel, 2016).

Research has shown that formalizing a plan of when and where tasks will be undertaken helps people to quickly get started on those tasks, even when the tasks are undesirable (e.g., Gollwitzer, 1999). By expressing a conscious intent to engage in a particular action,

enactment of the behavior becomes cognitively yoked to the “when and where,” and promotes immediate and automatic behavior upon being confronted with that temporal and geographic situation (e.g., Brandstätter et al., 2001). Thus, by formulating a plan of what they intend to accomplish that day at work, employees’ attention and energy become focused on engaging in those tasks, and can resist distractions to those efforts.

Accordingly, our second intervention was a *work reattachment intervention*, which involved asking employees to record their pressing and important work tasks and explicitly direct themselves to focus on them that day. Indeed, Latham and Locke (2007) speculated that making this sort of intentional plan could “help one to get started on a task” (p. 297). We anticipate that asking employees to take a few moments to think about and plan important tasks that they would like to accomplish at work that day—in other words, to reattach themselves to work—will help to increase how quickly they become immersed in work that day, subsequently increasing their level of engagement and daily productivity (e.g., Parke et al., 2018).

Hypothesis 8: On days when employees receive the work reattachment intervention in the morning, they will report greater speed of engagement compared to days when they do not receive any intervention.

Hypothesis 9: Compared to the control condition, the work reattachment intervention will increase daily goal progress via its effects on speed of engagement and level of engagement.

Study 2 Method

Sample and Procedure

This study was approved by the Temple University IRB (Study 25072). Approximately 8,000 U.S. employees from all main functional areas (e.g., product development, finance, human resources, marketing) of a large multinational software company were invited by email to participate in our study. In exchange for their participation, employees were told that for each completed survey, they would receive one entry into a drawing for their choice of one of five grand prizes donated by the company, worth an average of approximately \$1,000. In addition, bonus entries were offered to employees who completed an entire week of surveys (i.e., a complete week of 20 surveys was awarded an additional 20 entries). Six hundred eighty employees expressed interest in participating in the study and were sent an initial registration survey that contained measures for average job engagement, personality variables, preferences for work-home separation, and their preferred times for receiving and completing the four daily surveys. Due to privacy considerations and at the request of the company, no demographic variables were collected. After 1 week, 572 employees had completed the registration survey. Of these, 100 employees were randomly selected to participate in the pilot study described in the measures section for Study 1; an additional 96 employees declined to participate further. The remaining 376 were invited to continue with the daily portion of the study.

Study 2 was conducted on 15 consecutive workdays and the logistics associated with the surveys closely followed those described for Study 1. The T1 survey, administered prior to employees beginning work for the day, included the T1 control variables. On days for which employees received an intervention, this

appeared on the final screen of the T1 survey, as described below. Speed of engagement was assessed on the T2 survey (completed immediately prior to the lunch break), along with the T2 level of engagement and daily goal progress control variables. Level of engagement was assessed on the T3 survey, which was completed shortly before the end of the work day. Daily goal progress was assessed on the T4 survey, which was completed before employees went to bed for the evening. On average, the T1 survey was completed at 8:11 a.m. (min = 5:24 a.m.; max = 11:59 a.m.), the T2 survey at 11:47 a.m. (min = 10:25 a.m.; max = 1:59 p.m.), the T3 survey at 5:04 p.m. (min = 3:30 p.m.; max = 8:52 p.m.), and the T4 survey at 8:42 p.m. (min = 7:30 p.m.; max = 1:58 a.m.).

After matching observations across the four daily surveys, 310 employees provided 2,656 complete daily observations (8.6 observations per employee; 57.1% day-level response rate). Several factors may have contributed to this response rate, which is somewhat lower than those typically reported in ESM studies. For example, we were not permitted to restrict participation in later surveys (e.g., T2, T3, T4) to those employees who had not completed earlier surveys; given that there were prize entries at stake, the company argued that this could be perceived as unfair to employees who felt they were too busy to respond to earlier surveys. We also collected these data during the summer, when many employees were taking vacation; indeed, we received many emails asking for us to “put on hold” survey invitations for one or two of the 3 weeks of the study. Finally, we collected these data right in the middle of the 2018 FIFA World Cup, which may have contributed to ebbs and flows of response patterns.

We then used similar inclusion criteria to those in Study 1, and removed survey responses that were completed more than 90 min after the employee had requested they receive it. This resulted in the removal of 773 observations. We then removed 47 employees who completed surveys for fewer than three of the 15 days, leaving us with 1810 complete daily observations from 232 employees (an average of 7.8 observations per employee). The Study 2 results held whether or not these observations and/or employees were removed from the sample. Our daily-level response rate (57.1%) was somewhat lower than the response rates of typical ESM studies (Gabriel et al., 2019); thus, it is possible that simply ignoring the missing data on cases for which we had partial responses (e.g., when an employee completed the first three daily surveys but missed the fourth one) could lead to biased and inaccurate parameter estimates and standard errors (Newman, 2014). Indeed, in our dataset, we had a total of 3,730 partial or full days of observations nested within 366 employees (an average of 10.2 workdays per employee). Accordingly, we sought to investigate the mechanism associated with the missingness and treat the missing data in a more appropriate manner. We include discussion of this investigation, along with results of analyses using a Bayes estimator in Mplus, in Online Appendix A. Importantly, those results did not differ from those we report here.

Following the Song et al. (2018) study design featuring two interventions, all employees were assigned to the control condition during the first five workdays of the study period. Half of the sample were randomly assigned to receive the home detachment intervention during the second week, and the work reattachment intervention during the third week. The other half of the sample received the work reattachment intervention in the second week and the home detachment intervention in the third week. Interventions were

administered on the final screen of the T1 (morning) survey, after employees had completed all of that survey's items.

Interventions

One of the goals we had in creating the interventions was to enable the typical employee of today's workplace to utilize them to increase the speed of engagement. We considered several factors in the design stage. In an effort to avoid disrupting the speed of engagement or work engagement itself, we aimed to design the interventions such that they could be used before employees arrived at the office in the morning. Given variations in work arrangements both between employees (e.g., work-from-home, office work, travel) and for any one individual (i.e., alternating between these possibilities), we desired to create interventions that could be used virtually anywhere. Importantly, given the hectic pace of morning, pre-working hours for many adults, we also wanted the interventions to be relatively quick and simple to perform. Given these objectives, we ultimately decided to use the voice memo feature on people's smartphones for our interventions. On the first day of the intervention period, employees were taught how to locate and use the voice memo feature on their own smartphone to create short recordings, which could then be reviewed later in the day.

Home Detachment Intervention

Prior to starting work for the day, we asked employees to attempt to clear their mind of family or home matters that could otherwise distract them from being fully present at work (e.g., chores they needed to complete, conversations they needed to have, issues needing resolution). To do this, we instructed them to create a recording of the three most important family or home life tasks that were currently pressing, and tell themselves to detach from these matters until they can refocus on them at the end of the workday. Full instructions for both interventions are provided in the Appendix A.

Work Reattachment Intervention

Prior to starting work for the day, we asked employees to attempt to prepare themselves to be fully present at work. To do this, we asked them to briefly review their key work tasks and obligations, and to make a recording of the three work tasks that were currently pressing or on their mind (e.g., tasks they needed to complete, conversations they needed to have, issues needing resolution), and to remind themselves to focus on these tasks that day.

Measures

The Study 2 items were identical to those described for Study 1. Several of the instructions for the measures were slightly different. For the speed of engagement items, employees were asked to "think back to shortly after you started work this morning." For the level of engagement items, employees responded to items about how they felt "right now." In our analyses, we included the same set of control variables, with two additions. In the equations predicting level of engagement (T3) and daily goal progress, we controlled for the level of engagement at T2. Further, at the between-individual level, we controlled for a dummy variable that represented the order employees received the interventions (Song et al., 2018). This variable was

coded as 0 for employees who received the home detachment intervention first and one for employees who received the work reattachment intervention first. All items are shown in Appendix B.

Analytical Strategy

Our analytical procedures were identical to those described for Study 1, including group-mean centering of our predictors, along with modeling all of the hypothesized paths as random slopes. Each of our variables showed adequate within-individual (i.e., daily) variance (60.6 percent for speed of engagement, 61.5 percent for level of engagement (T3), and 67.2 percent for daily goal progress).

We included the items from the measured variables (including the control variables) in a ML-CFA. Once again, we specified the error terms of identical items to covary (Cole et al., 2007). Results showed that our hypothesized, 14-factor measurement model showed good fit to the data, $\chi^2_{(695)} = 1977.21$, $p < .001$, CFI = .94, RMSEA = .03, SRMR_(within) = .05. It was a significantly better fit than the alternative models we estimated, including a 13-factor model in which the speed of engagement and T2 level of engagement items were specified to load onto a single factor, $\chi^2_{(708)} = 2894.41$, $p < .001$, CFI = .90, RMSEA = .04, SRMR_(within) = .06, $S-B\Delta\chi^2_{(13)} = 1084.86$, $p < .001$, including a 13-factor model in which the speed of engagement and T3 level of engagement items were specified to load onto a single factor, $\chi^2_{(708)} = 3392.23$, $p < .001$, CFI = .88, RMSEA = .05, SRMR_(within) = .06, $S-B\Delta\chi^2_{(13)} = 1083.19$, $p < .001$, and a 13-factor model in which the speed of engagement and daily goal progress items were specified to load onto a single factor, $\chi^2_{(708)} = 3471.55$, $p < .001$, CFI = .88, RMSEA = .05, SRMR_(within) = .06, $S-B\Delta\chi^2_{(13)} = 1274.20$, $p < .001$. We again estimated the variance explained in the dependent variables with pseudo- R^2 (Snijders & Bosker, 1999).

Study 2 Results

Table 3 shows the means, standard deviations, reliabilities, and correlations for the Study 2 variables. Table 4 shows the results of the multilevel path analyses. Although the purpose of Study 2 was to test the efficacy of the interventions (*Hypotheses 6 through 9*), our data also allowed us to test *Hypothesis 1*, which is subsumed in the larger model. The direct effect of the speed of engagement on the level of engagement was significant ($\gamma = .11$, $p = .002$), as was the direct effect of the level of engagement on daily goal progress ($\gamma = .16$, $p < .001$). Taking these together, the indirect effect of the speed of engagement on daily goal progress (via the level of engagement) was significant, $\rho = .02$, 95% CI = [.0049, .0302], supporting *Hypothesis 1*.

Hypothesis 6 predicted on days when employees receive the home detachment intervention in the morning, they would report greater speed of engagement compared to control days. The term representing the home detachment intervention relative to the control condition was significant ($\gamma = .12$, $p = .004$), supporting *Hypothesis 6*.

Hypothesis 7 predicted that, compared to the control condition, the home detachment intervention would increase daily goal progress via its effects on speed of engagement and level of engagement. Combining the direct effect of the intervention (*Hypothesis 6*) with the indirect effect of the speed of engagement on daily goal progress via the level of engagement (*Hypothesis 1*), the overall indirect effect of the term representing the home detachment intervention (via speed of engagement and level of engagement) was significant

Table 3
Study 2 Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Among the Variables

Variable	Mean	<i>SD_w</i>	<i>SD_b</i>	ω - <i>b</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Home detachment intervention (vs. control)	.30	.46	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
2. Work reattachment intervention (vs. control)	.29	.46	—	—	-.42*	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
3. Speed of engagement	3.92	.66	.53	.96	.04	.02	(.92)	.75*	.66*	.41*	-.25*	-.32*
4. Level of engagement (T3)	3.66	.73	.57	1.00	-.00	.02	.19*	(.92)	.60*	.28*	-.16*	-.10
5. Daily goal progress	3.81	.60	.42	.98	.01	.02	.30*	.31*	(.94)	.40*	-.15*	-.23*
Measured control variables												
6. T1 positive affect	2.23	.65	.76	.98	-.04	-.05*	.14*	.04	-.00	(.94)	.02	-.29*
7. T1 negative affect	1.37	.42	.34	.98	-.09*	.05*	-.10*	-.02	-.05*	-.28*	(.94)	.67*
8. T1 stress	2.30	.69	.71	.98	-.05*	.03	-.13*	-.01	-.00	-.34*	.48*	(.93)
9. T2 level of engagement	3.85	.63	.56	.96	-.01	.03	.50*	.26*	.35*	.10*	-.04	-.02
10. T2 positive affect	2.31	.64	.80	.98	-.05*	-.04	.17*	.08*	.08*	.41*	-.18*	-.18*
11. T2 negative affect	1.40	.46	.36	.98	-.05	.04	-.09*	-.07*	-.09*	-.15*	.40*	.25*
12. T2 stress	2.40	.69	.77	.97	-.01	.03	-.10*	-.03	-.04	-.18*	.26*	.41*
13. T2 goal progress	3.79	.67	.43	.98	-.00	.07*	.50*	.20*	.40*	.06*	-.01	-.01
14. T3 positive affect	2.38	.71	.79	.98	-.07*	-.05*	.11*	.21*	.15*	.30*	-.09*	-.08*
15. T3 negative affect	1.39	.45	.36	.97	-.05*	.04	-.05*	-.05*	-.08*	-.08*	.26*	.15*
16. T3 stress	2.51	.71	.81	.98	-.04	-.01	-.04	.01	-.05*	-.09*	.15*	.28*
Other control variables												
17. Day of week ^a	2.90	1.39	—	—	-.02	-.02	.01	-.09*	.03	-.00	-.02	.00
18. Sine	.22	.72	—	—	.01	.02	.02	.09*	-.01	-.01	.01	-.00
19. Cosine	-.32	.57	—	—	.02	.01	-.06*	-.01	-.07*	.07*	.02	.01
20. Manipulation order (between-person level) ^b	.50	—	.50	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Variable	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
1. Home detachment intervention (vs. control)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
2. Work reattachment intervention (vs. control)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
3. Speed of engagement	.90*	.41*	-.14*	-.21*	.75*	.37*	-.16*	-.20*	—	—	—	-.03
4. Level of engagement (T3)	.88*	.33*	-.09	-.08	.67*	.34*	-.14*	-.07	—	—	—	.00
5. Daily goal progress	.73*	.46*	-.11*	-.21*	.91*	.40*	-.11	-.18*	—	—	—	-.01
Measured control variables												
6. T1 positive affect	.42*	.95*	.01	-.31*	.39*	.93*	.01	-.27*	—	—	—	.00
7. T1 negative affect	-.18*	-.01	.92*	.57*	-.17*	.03	.91*	.55*	—	—	—	-.01
8. T1 stress	-.19*	-.29*	.63*	.92*	-.24*	-.28*	.62*	.90*	—	—	—	-.02
9. T2 level of engagement	(.93)	.46*	-.15*	-.15*	.79*	.42*	-.15*	-.12	—	—	—	-.02
10. T2 positive affect	.22*	(.93)	-.04	-.34*	.40*	.98*	-.04	-.31*	—	—	—	-.01
11. T2 negative affect	-.13*	-.29*	(.93)	.67*	-.10	.00	.99*	.65*	—	—	—	-.01
12. T2 stress	-.09*	-.34*	.51*	(.93)	-.21*	-.32*	.67*	.99*	—	—	—	-.01
13. T2 goal progress	.56*	.18*	-.13*	-.07*	(.94)	.36*	-.10	-.17*	—	—	—	-.01
14. T3 positive affect	.15*	.38*	-.18*	-.18*	.11*	(.93)	-.02	-.32*	—	—	—	-.02
15. T3 negative affect	-.04	-.13*	.38*	.24*	-.05*	-.31*	(.93)	.67*	—	—	—	.00
16. T3 stress	-.01	-.18*	.25*	.41*	-.04	-.34*	.46*	(.92)	—	—	—	-.01
Other control variables												
17. Day of week ^a	-.01	.07*	-.00	.05*	.03	.05*	-.02	-.01	—	—	—	—
18. Sine	.03	-.08*	.02	-.03	.01	-.06*	.04	.02	-.93*	—	—	—
19. Cosine	-.07*	.00	-.03	-.07*	-.07*	.02	-.02	-.06*	-.63*	.38*	—	—
20. Manipulation order (between-person level) ^b	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Note. $n = 1810$ T1(morning)–T2(lunch)–T3(afternoon)–T4(evening) matched observations nested within 232 employees. Correlations below the diagonal reflect values at the within-individual level of analysis (e.g., group-mean centered). Correlations above the diagonal reflect values at the between-individual level of analysis. Within-individual composite reliability (ω -*w*) estimates are in parentheses on the diagonal. Between-individual composite reliability (ω -*b*) estimates are listed next to the standard deviations. Demographics were not collected from this sample at the request of the organization. ^a Day of week coded 1–5 (Monday–Friday). ^b 0 = received home detachment intervention first; 1 = received work reattachment intervention first.

* $p < .05$.

on daily goal progress, $\rho = .002$, 95% CI = [.0004, .0044]. Thus, *Hypothesis 7* was supported.

Hypothesis 8 predicted on days when employees receive the work reattachment intervention in the morning, they would report

greater speed of engagement compared to control days. The term representing the work reattachment intervention relative to the control condition was significant ($\gamma = .10$, $p = .036$), supporting *Hypothesis 8*.

Table 4
Study 2 Results of Multilevel Path Analysis

Variable	Speed of engagement			Level of engagement			Daily goal progress		
	γ	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	γ	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	γ	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>
Intercept	3.62**	.12	30.70	1.57**	.19	8.25	1.57**	.15	10.34
Control variables									
Manipulation order (Between-person level) ^b	-.02	.02	-.79	.01	.02	.64	.00	.02	.11
Day of week ^a	.01	.05	.19	-.13**	.05	-2.69	-.03	.03	-.96
Sine	.07	.07	.92	-.09	.08	-1.22	-.07	.05	-1.30
Cosine	-.09	.05	-1.84	-.13**	.05	-2.65	-.05	.04	-1.35
T1 positive affect	.08**	.03	2.76	-.06	.03	-1.85	-.04	.02	-1.83
T1 negative affect	-.05	.05	-1.06	-.03	.05	-.57	-.05	.04	-1.38
T1 stress	-.07*	.03	-2.46	-.01	.03	-.40	-.01	.02	.61
T2 level of engagement				.33**	.04	7.84	.11**	.03	3.32
T2 positive affect	.15**	.03	5.57	-.05	.03	-1.55	-.01	.02	-.31
T2 negative affect	-.02	.05	-.38	-.03	.04	-.80	.00	.04	-.00
T2 stress	.00	.03	.14	.00	.03	.04	.00	.03	.11
T2 goal progress							.27**	.03	9.47
T3 positive affect				.24**	.03	7.26	.07**	.02	3.32
T3 negative affect				-.02	.05	-.53	-.00	.03	-.04
T3 stress				.09**	.03	2.77	-.01	.02	-.70
Hypothesized predictors									
Home detachment intervention (vs. control)	.12**	.04	2.88	.03	.04	.71	.01	.04	.35
Work reattachment intervention (vs. control)	.10*	.05	2.10	.06	.04	1.43	-.01	.04	-.17
Speed of engagement				.11**	.04	3.05	.06*	.03	2.39
Level of engagement (T3)							.16**	.03	5.84
Pseudo- <i>R</i> ²		.15			.46			.54	

Note. $n = 1810$ T1(morning)–T2(lunch)–T3(afternoon)–T4(evening) matched observations nested within 232 employees. All hypothesized paths are estimated with random slopes. Table values are unstandardized coefficient and standard errors. ^aDay of week coded 1–5 (Monday–Friday). ^b0 = received home detachment intervention first; 1 = received work reattachment intervention first.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$, two-tailed.

Hypothesis 9 predicted that, compared to the control condition, the work reattachment intervention would increase daily goal progress via its effects on speed of engagement and level of engagement. Combining the direct effect of the intervention (*Hypothesis 8*) with the indirect effect of the speed of engagement on daily goal progress via the level of engagement (*Hypothesis 1*), the overall indirect effect of the term representing the work reattachment intervention (via speed of engagement and level of engagement) was significant on daily goal progress, $\rho = .002$, 95% CI = [.0004, .0040]. Thus, *Hypothesis 9* was supported.

Supplemental Analyses

The present work climate (i.e., concerning the effects of COVID-19) has fundamentally altered the way people work. In particular, many more employees are now working from home, where it may be even more difficult to detach from home and family concerns or to reattach to work absent physical movement from home to work. It could be argued, then, that our interventions are even more important for employees working from home.

Although our Study 2 data were collected in 2018, the organization from which they were collected had a policy that any employee could work from home (or anywhere else) anytime they desired. Thus, our 1810 daily observations consisted of a mix of days on which employees were working at the office (40.6 percent), from home (52.9 percent) or from a third location (e.g., remotely while traveling, 6.5 percent). To test whether the strength of the interventions was stronger if the employee was working at

home, we added terms representing the direct effect of location (0 = office or other location; 1 = working from home), along with its interaction with the intervention terms to the equation predicting speed of engagement. The results showed that neither the direct effect of location ($\gamma = .09$, $SE = .08$, $p = .255$) nor the interaction terms associated with the home detachment intervention ($\gamma = -.14$, $SE = .08$, $p = .081$) or work reattachment intervention ($\gamma = -.07$, $SE = .08$, $p = .409$) were significant. These results suggest that the work reattachment intervention was not more effective when employees were working at home compared to when they were working at the office or elsewhere.

Further, Ashforth et al. (2000) theorized that role transitions might operate differently for those who prefer to separate versus integrate their work and nonwork lives (see also Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). Indeed, these preferences can result in the creation and habitual use of different tactics to achieve one's ideal level of integration or separation (Kreiner et al., 2009). Thus, it is possible detaching from home may feel unnatural to an employee who prefers integration and may not result in a similar speed of engagement as for employees who prefer segmentation. We investigated this possibility by testing whether the effectiveness of the interventions on the speed of engagement differed according to employees' work-home separation preferences. We assessed employee's preference for separating home from work on the registration survey by adapting Kreiner's (2006) four-item measure (e.g., "I don't like to have to think about home while I'm at work," "I prefer to keep home life at home;" $M = 3.40$, $SD = .84$, coefficient $\alpha = .83$). Results showed that the separation preference

x home detachment intervention cross-level interaction term was not significant on the speed of engagement ($\gamma = .07$, $SE = .05$, $p = .107$); the separation preference x work reattachment intervention cross-level interaction term was also not significant ($\gamma = -.06$, $SE = .05$, $p = .290$). The main effect of separation preferences on speed of engagement was significant ($\gamma = .13$, $SE = .04$, $p < .01$), offering evidence that employees who prefer separating home from work, on average, achieve greater speed of engagement.

Overall Discussion

Helping employees increase their effectiveness and attain high productivity are key objectives for managers and organizations. Conventional wisdom has told us that the recipe for this type of success is to increase employee engagement; thus, researchers and practitioners have invested considerable resources into the search for what drives employees to be highly engaged. Although this line of inquiry has produced important insights, our research launches a new line of inquiry that can help to expand our understanding of employee daily productivity by asking a slightly different question: does it matter how quickly employees become engaged? By infusing core principles of boundary transition theory (Ashforth et al., 2000) with the literature on engagement, our research finds evidence across two studies that daily productivity is not only a function of how engaged employees are but also the speed with which they become engaged after beginning the workday. The speed of engagement is driven by at least two factors: psychological detachment from nonwork concerns and the psychological preparation for work associated with work reattachment in the morning. To facilitate employees' speed of engagement, we offer two short smartphone interventions that serve as rites of passage (Ashforth et al., 2000), and ultimately bolster daily productivity.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Most directly, our research broadens the literature on daily work engagement. Until now, theorizing on engagement has singularly focused on explaining and improving the level—or depth—of an individual's engagement in their work (Kahn, 1990, 1992). Given the extensive research evidence of the value of engagement level for employee productivity (Christian et al., 2011; Crawford et al., 2010; Rich et al., 2010), we may mistakenly conclude that we know all that there is to know about this motivational construct. Introducing the concept of speed of engagement opens the possibility that there remain theoretical unknowns about the role of engagement at work—particularly that the quickness of becoming engaged in the morning is a critical component to understanding how to fully capitalize on this motivational state. Indeed, in order to better understand how engagement contributes to daily productivity, it is necessary to capture a fuller picture of how employees' resource investments are shaped, both in terms of their extent and timing. Despite similar midday levels of engagement, employee productivity will not likely be the same on two different days where they experienced different speeds of engagement with work in the morning.

Moreover, by incorporating boundary transition theory (Ashforth et al., 2000), our research provides new theoretical insight into a particularly important part of the day for employee engagement—the

morning, when people are actively transitioning into their work roles. Exploring the concept of speed of engagement through this theoretical lens sheds light on how employees may proactively manage their transition to work so that they may engage more quickly and reap the benefit of a more productive workday. Ultimately, this extension of the traditional engagement concept provides a richer and more nuanced account of this already important motivational predictor of employee productivity.

Given our focus on employees' transitions between their non-work and work roles, Kahn's (1990, 1992) conceptualization of engagement, which emphasizes the importance of employees' resource investment in the work *role*, was a natural fit. It is likely, though, that the speed of engagement construct would offer complementarities for theorizing regarding other conceptualizations of engagement, such as that advanced by Schaufeli, Bakker, and colleagues (e.g., Bakker, 2014; Bakker et al., 2008; Schaufeli et al., 2002). In their view, engagement encapsulates the way an employee experiences their work in terms of the amount of vigor, dedication, and absorption they feel during work activities. Given this perspective, the speed of engagement would represent how quickly an employee is able to experience these states after a period of not working.

Although we borrowed from boundary transitions theory (Ashforth et al., 2000) in building a conceptual framework with which to study the speed of engagement, our research also gives back to this theory. Ashforth et al.'s (2000) original focus was on the mechanics of the role transition and their effect on employees' affective responses, but they tasked researchers with considering whether and how transitions impact behavioral outcomes, such as engagement and performance. Our study answers this call. We provide a conceptual explanation and find supportive evidence for the importance of the role transition for employee engagement and productivity. This finding, in particular, suggests that the home-to-work transition is a critical aspect of the employee experience, and ought to be given greater attention by researchers.

Further, our interventions, framed as rites of passage in the transition from home to work, introduce a more proactive and agentic dynamic to the role transition. Ashforth et al. (2000) theorized about cues that prompt the transition (e.g., time, completion of a task, exhaustion) or physical movement that serves as a transition rite itself (e.g., the commute). In contrast, we highlight that rites of passage are not necessarily passive phenomena that stimulate a transition or occur during it, but that employees can use them deliberately to achieve a smoother and quicker role transition. Moreover, our focus on the cognitive aspect of these rites offers a reminder that the transition to work can occur without physical movement. This is a critical contribution toward what we anticipate being an important line of research as organizations and their employees move toward greater use of nontraditional working arrangements (e.g., home offices, other remote work configurations).

Finally, our research also contributes to the literature on work reattachment (Sonnentag & Kühnel, 2016; Sonnentag et al., 2020). Early conceptual work on this construct suggested that work reattachment functions to increase work engagement by putting nonwork concerns and attention "gradually into the background" (Sonnentag & Kühnel, 2016, p. 381), or, in short, through detachment from home. However, boundary transitions theory (Ashforth et al., 2000) treats

the role exit and role entry processes as distinct; accordingly, we argued that the work reattachment and detachment from home processes are independent, particularly as they relate to the speed of engagement. Our data support the distinctiveness of these constructs; psychological detachment from home and morning work reattachment were not significantly correlated in our Study 1, in which we measured both constructs (within-individual $r = .06, ns$; between-individual $r = .00, ns$). Thus, notwithstanding the excellent work of Sonnentag et al. (2020), our findings call for researchers to dig deeper to understand how work reattachment operates.

Our study also offers practical insight for managers seeking ways to help their employees achieve greater daily productivity. In particular, our results suggest that creating some (psychological) space from home and/or psychologically preparing for the workday ahead can help employees quickly plunge into the workday, which ultimately contributes to making larger strides toward work goals. Our results regarding psychological detachment from home present novel insights about how employees can cognitively separate from the nonwork domain in the morning. Our findings echo the idea that it is difficult to be simultaneously involved with multiple important matters at once (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Kanfer & Ackerman, 1989). Accordingly, we offer a quick and easy cognitive intervention that anyone can use to actively manage the exit from one's nonwork role. Purposefully putting aside home concerns for the day allows employees to quickly focus and immerse themselves into the morning's work, setting the tone for the rest of the day, and ultimately paying dividends in terms of daily productivity. Concerning reattachment to work, itself a nascent concept in the literature (Sonnentag et al., 2020), our intervention provides a concrete way to operationalize this strategy.

Future Research Directions

Our research provides a good foundation for future research on the topic of speed of engagement, including more in-depth exploration of its nomological network as we have conceptualized it here. Quickly immersing oneself in work is likely to feel good (Bakker, 2014), and, thus, it would be important to examine the emotional effects of the speed of engagement, along with whether affect plays a role in helping to shape people's perception of how much work they were able to accomplish over the course of the day. We also think it would be fruitful to examine this phenomenon from a congruence perspective (e.g., Edwards, 2008), juxtaposing how quickly the employee engaged on a particular day with how quickly they anticipated or desired engaging. It may be that when wanting to quickly immerse oneself in important work and not being able to because of some other factor, frustration and other negative emotions ensue. Similarly, desiring an easy early morning and being met with urgent demands that necessitate immediate investments of concentration and energy may cause greater stress and strain than these demands would normally. Future research should also consider whether there are drawbacks associated with a high speed of engagement. For example, because they quickly immerse themselves in their work, these employees may not have as many opportunities to participate in the social fabric of their workgroups and organizations.

Researchers should also investigate other predictors of the speed of engagement. There has been a recent surge in research interest relating to employees' commute (e.g., Calderwood & Mitropoulos, 2021)

that could provide insight into factors that help or hinder a quick ramping up into work. For example, the duration of the commute relative to one's baseline or the stress experienced on a given morning may divert cognitive and emotional resources (Zhou et al., 2017) ordinarily invested quickly into one's work. Alternatively, a lengthier commute may provide an opportunity for employees to engage in detachment and/or reattachment tactics (e.g., Jachimowicz et al., 2021) that ultimately facilitate greater speed of engagement. Of course, a boundary transitions perspective (Ashforth et al., 2000) is just one way to frame this search for predictors. The work-family literature might also provide insight into drivers. For example, it may be that home/family stressors experienced the prior evening impact the extent to which employees can detach from the nonwork domain (e.g., Volman et al., 2013), and, thus, reduce employees' speed of engagement. The literature on human energy (Quinn et al., 2012) would also suggest that morning energy may also drive the speed of engagement, given the importance of the availability of resources for the engagement process (Kahn, 1990).

The speed of engagement might also be investigated at different levels of analysis. For example, it is likely that some employees have enacted strategies or routines that enable themselves to achieve a high speed of engagement on a regular basis. These between-persons differences are likely to be influenced by personality traits, such as conscientiousness, or even by chronotype, which influences the time of the day when a person is able to make investments of energy (Gunia et al., 2014). Consideration of who engages in activities other than work tasks may also help better understand this phenomenon; for example, considering the tendency of extroverts to socialize with others, it may be that people higher on this trait are more likely to achieve a lower speed of engagement on average.

Whether there is a group-level manifestation of the speed of engagement is also an interesting question. Star employees may set an example of what a productive worker looks like, influencing similar behaviors by others. It is also possible that the concept of speed of engagement can be applied to other even more micro role transitions. It would be interesting to understand how employees are able to quickly engage after a disruption to their regular work, such as after a lunch break, meeting, or interruption from a colleague, and how these quick engagements cumulatively affect productivity.

Limitations

Turning now to limitations of our work, it is important to recognize that fluctuations in the speed of engagement may be a luxury that not every employee in every occupation possesses. An anonymous reviewer offered the examples of the emergency room doctor or factory worker, who have very little control over the pacing of their work. For these employees, a high speed of engagement may be imposed upon them, with severe implications—such as work accidents and errors—associated with noncompliance. Although our Study 2 participants were drawn entirely from one organization, those included in Study 1 were drawn from a variety of jobs in a variety of industries. Thus, we are confident that our results are likely to generalize to a significant portion of the working population. Still, our samples were heavily skewed toward office-type workers; future research should consider the extent to which the

speed of engagement applies to occupations involving more hands-on work.

A notable limitation to our interventions concerns the possibility that some people may not have access to a smartphone for the purposes of recording audio messages. We note, though, that many interventions showcased in the organizational sciences (e.g., Lanaj et al., 2019; Song et al., 2018) ask participants to engage in a writing task, which can be completed without access to any sort of equipment. Although we did not test this with our sample, as every employee in the software company owned a smartphone, we would imagine that our interventions would be equally effective via this mode of engagement.

It is also possible that our interventions created a demand effect, wherein participants were motivated to behave (or simply to report behavior) consistent with what they believed were our expectations (Shadish et al., 2002). We were reluctant to add a “true control” task to the first five control days of the study given the company’s insistence on minimizing the amount of time required of its employees, and due to our own concerns about unnecessarily distracting participants from their commute or work preparations. From an analytical standpoint, we were able to largely rule out the possibility of a demand effect by including control terms that account for linear and cyclical trends in the data (Gabriel et al., 2019). Nonetheless, future research utilizing our interventions may consider using stronger experimental designs.

The effect sizes we found—particularly regarding the indirect effects of the interventions on daily goal progress, which was serially mediated by two mediators—appear small. However, we note that they are similar in strength to those reported in papers with similar models (e.g., Matta et al., 2017; Song et al., 2018). Furthermore, it has been argued that for low-cost interventions (ours had zero cost other than the minute it took to record the message), any significant effect found on important dependent variables is important (Cortina & Landis, 2009; Prentice & Miller, 1992). Yet, we encourage researchers to replicate our work to ensure its validity.

Finally, our measure for the speed of engagement is just one way to assess how quickly an employee becomes engaged in the workday. As with any such psychological measure, asking employees to rate something that has occurred in the past—even if only a few hours before—introduces the possibility of bias due to one’s emotional state or other external events (Gabriel et al., 2019). Another possibility for assessing the speed of engagement would be to model it using multiple assessments of engagement over the course of the morning and workday. Of course, the more that study participants are prompted to report about their engagement, the greater the disruption to their work (and to their engagement). Thus, researchers interested in modeling the speed of engagement through frequent and repeated assessments of engagement should look for unobtrusive ways to do so. For example, one research team in the field of informatics (see Mark, 2016 for an overview) combines frequent single-item measures of attention with biosensors, eye-tracking devices, and computer logs to render a more complete picture of the temporal dynamics of employee productivity. Potential improvements associated with this methodology come with costs, though. The required equipment is quite expensive and involves intensive set-up for each user and, thus, limit the sample sizes that can be reasonably achieved.

Conclusion

The speed of engagement—ultimately the result of the home-to-work transition—helps to fuel employees’ level of engagement and contribute to the productivity of their workday. By psychologically detaching from home concerns and reattaching to work in the morning, employees are able to achieve greater speed of engagement. Managers might coach employees to engage in our interventions—simple cognitive exercises that can be employed virtually anywhere—in an effort to help employees more quickly engage in the morning and, ultimately, achieve greater progress toward daily work goals. Researchers and practitioners should consider not only how to raise levels of engagement but also how to increase employees’ speed of engagement at the beginning of the workday.

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Appendix A

Intervention Instructions

Home Detachment Intervention

Research suggests that many people find it helpful to clear their mind of family or home duties that could distract them from being fully present at work.

We would like to invite you to do that before you begin work today. Try giving yourself permission to let go of family/home obligations for the work day, so that you can turn your full attention to your work.

Only when it is safe to do so (e.g., don't do this if driving in heavy traffic), use the voice recording app* on your phone to record the three most important things that are currently pressing or are on your mind concerning your family/home life. These could be chores you need to complete, conversations you need to have, or issues you need to resolve. End the recording by telling yourself that it's OK to leave these things behind and return to them at the end of the workday using the following phrase:

“I give myself permission to let go of these things today. After work, I will return to focus my attention on them.”

Please make this recording BEFORE you start work this morning.

* (iPhone = “Voice Memos”; Android = “Voice Recorder”)

Work Reattachment Intervention

Research suggests that many people find it helpful to prepare their mind in order to be fully present at work.

We would like to invite you to do that before you begin work today. Try planning your work day by reviewing and outlining your key tasks and obligations, so that when you begin your tasks, you can turn your full attention to your work.

Only when it is safe to do so (e.g., don't do this if driving in heavy traffic), use the voice recording app* on your phone to record the three most important things that are currently pressing or are on your mind concerning your work life. These could be tasks you need to complete, conversations you need to have, or issues you need to resolve. End the recording by telling yourself that it's OK to focus on these important things using the following phrase:

“Today, I give myself permission to focus on the important work tasks and duties that are on my plate.”

Please make this recording BEFORE you start work this morning.

* (iPhone = “Voice Memos”; Android = “Voice Recorder”)

Appendix B

Items for All Measures

Study 1

Positive Affect (T1, T2, T3 Surveys)

Please rate the extent to which you feel this way, right now.

(1 = *Very Slightly/Not at All*; 2 = *A Little*; 3 = *Moderately*; 4 = *Quite a Bit*; 5 = *Extremely*)

1. Delighted
2. Excited
3. Happy

Negative Affect (T1, T2, T3 Surveys)

Please rate the extent to which you feel this way, right now.

(1 = *Very Slightly/Not at All*; 2 = *A Little*; 3 = *Moderately*; 4 = *Quite a Bit*; 5 = *Extremely*)

1. Distressed
2. Angry
3. Sad

Stress (T1, T2, T3 Surveys)

Please rate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.

(1 = *Strongly Disagree*; 2 = *Disagree*; 3 = *Neither Agree nor Disagree*; 4 = *Agree*; 5 = *Strongly Agree*)

1. I am experiencing a great deal of stress right now.

(Appendices continue)

2. I feel emotionally drained right now.
3. I am feeling overextended at the moment.

Morning Work Reattachment (T1 Survey)

Please rate the extent to which you agree that you have engaged in the following so far this morning.

(1 = *Strongly Disagree*; 2 = *Disagree*; 3 = *Neither Agree nor Disagree*; 4 = *Agree*; 5 = *Strongly Agree*)

1. I have been mentally preparing for my work today.
2. I have been mentally tuning into my work.
3. I have been giving some thought to the upcoming workday.
4. I have been thinking about what I want to achieve at work today.
5. I have been thinking about what I will encounter at my work today.

Psychological Detachment From Home (T2 Survey)

To what extent would you agree with each of the following?

(1 = *Strongly Disagree*; 2 = *Disagree*; 3 = *Neither Agree nor Disagree*; 4 = *Agree*; 5 = *Strongly Agree*)

1. Since beginning my work, I have been able to forget about family/off-the-job concerns.
2. Since beginning my work, I have not thought about family/off-the-job concerns.
3. Since beginning my work, I have gotten a break from my family/off-the-job demands.

Speed of Engagement (T2 Survey)

You have been at work for approximately 2 hr this morning. Thinking about the time between when you arrived at the office and right now, to what extent would you agree with of the following?

(1 = *Strongly Disagree*; 2 = *Disagree*; 3 = *Neither Agree nor Disagree*; 4 = *Agree*; 5 = *Strongly Agree*)

1. I quickly felt energetic at the start of my work day.
2. I quickly became focused about my work.
3. I quickly became immersed in my work.

Level of Engagement (T3 Survey)

Since completing the mid-morning survey, how have you felt?

(1 = *Strongly Disagree*; 2 = *Disagree*; 3 = *Neither Agree nor Disagree*; 4 = *Agree*; 5 = *Strongly Agree*)

1. I felt energetic at my job.
2. I was very focused on my job.
3. I devoted a lot of energy to my job.

Daily Goal Progress (T4 Survey)

As you reflect on how much you were able to accomplish at work today ...

(1 = *Strongly Disagree*; 2 = *Disagree*; 3 = *Neither Agree nor Disagree*; 4 = *Agree*; 5 = *Strongly Agree*)

1. I made good progress on my work goals.
2. At work, I was productive.
3. I fulfilled my roles and responsibilities more effectively than I typically do.

Daily Goal Progress (T2 Survey; Control Variable)

To what extent do you agree with each item as it relates to your progress thus far today?

(1 = *Strongly Disagree*; 2 = *Disagree*; 3 = *Neither Agree nor Disagree*; 4 = *Agree*; 5 = *Strongly Agree*)

1. I have made good progress on my work goals.
2. I have been productive.
3. I have fulfilled my roles and responsibilities more effectively than I typically do.

Study 2

Positive Affect (T1, T2, T3 Surveys)

Please rate the extent to which you feel this way, right now.

(1 = *Very Slightly/Not at All*; 2 = *A Little*; 3 = *Moderately*; 4 = *Quite a Bit*; 5 = *Extremely*)

1. Delighted
2. Excited
3. Happy

Negative Affect (T1, T2, T3 Surveys)

Please rate the extent to which you feel this way, right now.

(1 = *Very Slightly/Not at All*; 2 = *A Little*; 3 = *Moderately*; 4 = *Quite a Bit*; 5 = *Extremely*)

1. Distressed
2. Angry
3. Sad

Stress (T1, T2, T3 Surveys)

Please rate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.

(1 = *Strongly Disagree*; 2 = *Disagree*; 3 = *Neither Agree nor Disagree*; 4 = *Agree*; 5 = *Strongly Agree*)

1. I am experiencing a great deal of stress right now.
2. I feel emotionally drained right now.
3. I am feeling overextended at the moment.

(Appendices continue)

Speed of Engagement (T2 Survey)

Think back to shortly after you started work this morning.

(1 = *Strongly Disagree*; 2 = *Disagree*; 3 = *Neither Agree nor Disagree*; 4 = *Agree*; 5 = *Strongly Agree*)

1. This morning, I quickly felt energetic at the start of my work day.
2. This morning, I quickly became focused about my work.
3. This morning, I quickly became immersed in my work.

Level of Engagement (T3 Survey)

How did you feel about your job immediately prior to beginning this survey?

(1 = *Strongly Disagree*; 2 = *Disagree*; 3 = *Neither Agree nor Disagree*; 4 = *Agree*; 5 = *Strongly Agree*)

1. I feel energetic at my job right now.
2. I am very focused on my job right now.
3. I am devoting a lot of energy to my job right now.

Daily Goal Progress (T4 Survey)

Reflecting on the overall progress you made at work over the course of the entire day today . . .

(1 = *Strongly Disagree*; 2 = *Disagree*; 3 = *Neither Agree nor Disagree*; 4 = *Agree*; 5 = *Strongly Agree*)

1. I made good progress on my work goals today.
2. At work today, I was productive.

3. Today, I fulfilled my roles and responsibilities more effectively than I typically do.

Level of Engagement (T2 Survey; Control Variable)

Please read each statement carefully and decide how you felt about your job immediately prior to beginning this survey.

(1 = *Strongly Disagree*; 2 = *Disagree*; 3 = *Neither Agree nor Disagree*; 4 = *Agree*; 5 = *Strongly Agree*)

1. I feel energetic at my job.
2. I am very focused on my job.
3. I am devoting a lot of energy to my job.

Daily Goal Progress (T2 Survey; Control Variable)

To what extent do you agree with each item as it relates to your progress thus far today?

(1 = *Strongly Disagree*; 2 = *Disagree*; 3 = *Neither Agree nor Disagree*; 4 = *Agree*; 5 = *Strongly Agree*)

1. Overall, I have made good progress on my work goals today.
2. At work today, I have been productive.
3. Today, I have fulfilled my roles and responsibilities more effectively than I typically do.

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