

Selection of routines in organizational search:

Role systems and routine systems in the search process

Amit Nigam, Cass Business School

Ruthanne Huising, McGill University

Brian Golden, University of Toronto

Routines & Organizational Change

- Change in routines is a critical component of organizational change
- Practice perspective on Routines
 - Change is endogenous
 - Experiential – cycles of performance & action
 - Routine specific – individual routine as a unit of analysis
 - Problems relating to performing individual routines may trigger re-evaluation and change

Partial account of how routines change

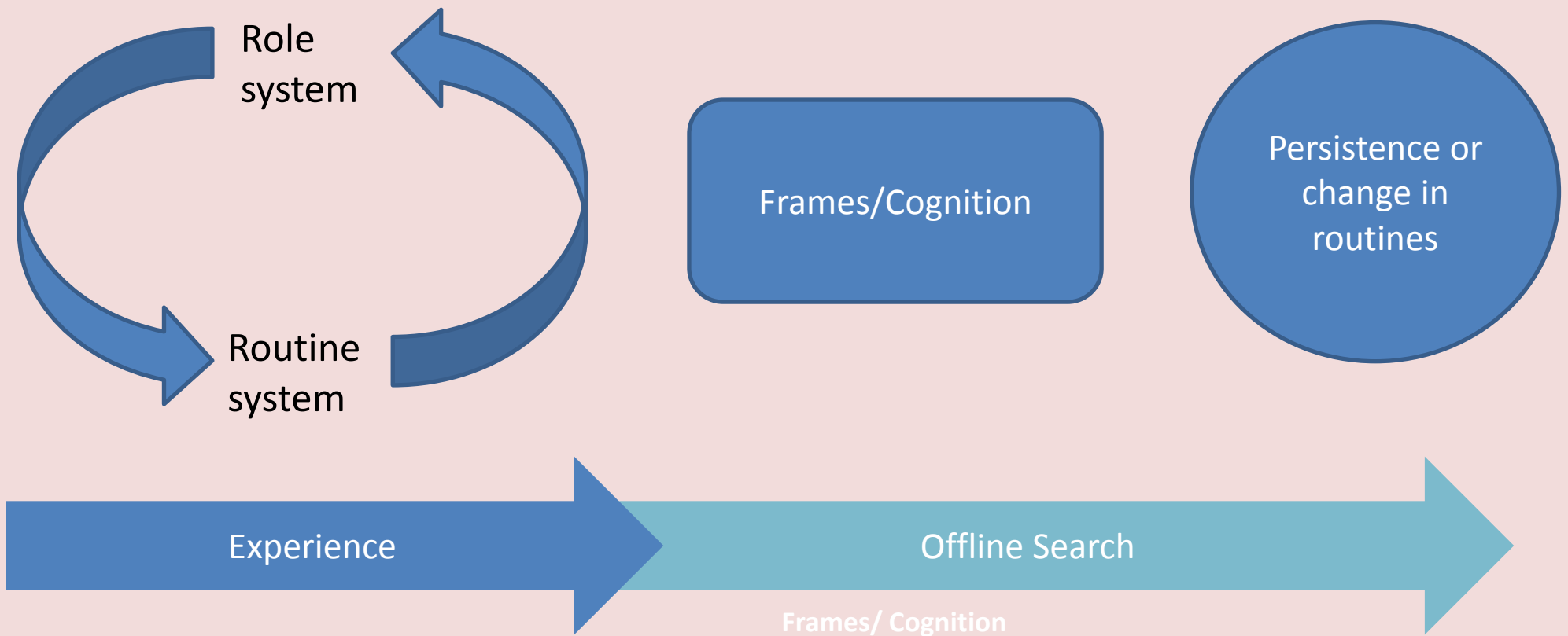
Cognitive Search

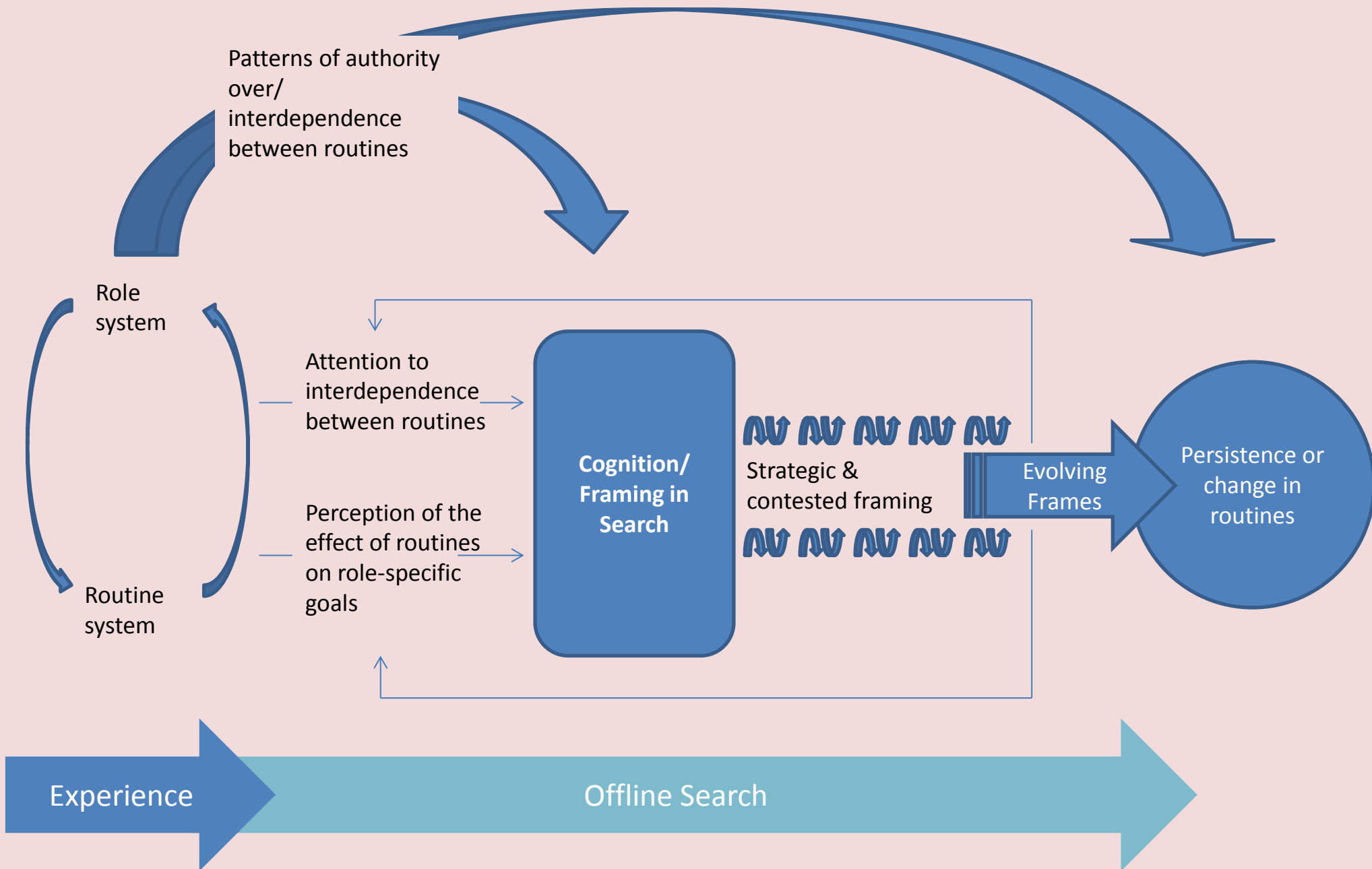
- Is a source of change in routines
- Contrasts with experiential (on-line) search
 - Triggered by problems < aspirations (on any goal)
 - Involves consideration of multiple alternatives
 - NOT trial-and-error
 - Draws on organization members' cognitive frameworks
- Involves selection of which routines to change
 - Search theory requires “a mechanism (a) for generating alternatives and (b) for choosing among those generated”

Our Study

- Research Question
 - How do organizations select which routines to change in cognitive search?
- Data
 - Participant observation of cognitive search process aimed at increasing perioperative efficiency in 7 Ontario hospitals
- Methods
 - Narrative and comparative case analysis of discussion of potential changes in routines relating to the use of OR resources and staff
 - 6 issues (e.g. scheduling surgical blocks, block allocation, moving procedures out of OR) & 25 proposed changes in routines

Simple Story: Roles & Routines





Patterns of Stability/Change

MD Collective Control	+	Interdependent Routines impact MDs , Admin & RNs	+	Goal conflict among MDs, coalitions with Admin	=	Change: 6 No Change: 1
MD Collective Control	+	Interdependent Routines impact MDs , Admin & RNs	+	Alignment between MDs & Admin	=	Change: 6 No Change: 0
MD Collective Control	+	Interdependent Routines impact Admin & RNs	+	Alignment between MDs & Admin	=	Change: 3 No Change: 2
MD Collective Control	+	Interdependent Routines impact Admin & RNs	+	Goal Conflict between MDs & Admin	=	Change: 0 No Change: 7

Contributions

Routines Literature

- Theorize selection of routines in cognitive search
- Attention to interdependence between routines
- Interplay between role system/ routine system central to routine change process

Search Literature

- Shows how experience informs cognitive search
- Attention to effects of history & embeddedness of routines on search
- (Re) Introduces role systems & political coalitions into search process