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ROLE CONFLICT IN STUDENT AFFAIRS:
A FOCUS ON MIDDLE MANAGERS

A Dissertation Presented

By

Patrick Edward Tigue

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

May 1986

School of Education

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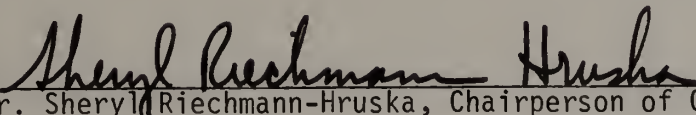
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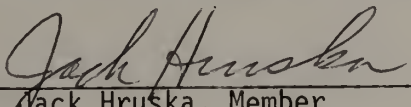
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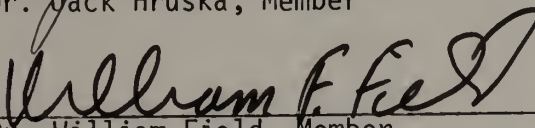
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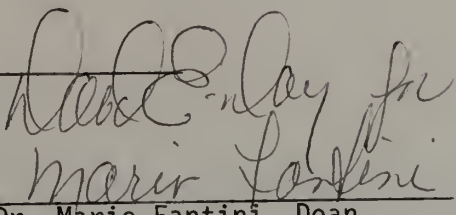
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DEDICATION

To Chris, Patrick, and Cara

ABSTRACT

ROLE CONFLICT IN STUDENT AFFAIRS:

A FOCUS ON MIDDLE MANAGERS

MAY 1986

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The purpose of this study was to address the lack of data on the role conflict experiences of student affairs middle managers. The primary research question investigated differences in degree of experienced role conflict among the four role conflict types used in the study: Person-Role conflict, Intra-Sender conflict, Inter-Role conflict and Inter-Sender conflict. A secondary research question investigated differences in the degree to which each type of role conflict was experienced by position type, years in current position and age. Supplemental interview data were gathered from selected subjects to provide descriptive information on individual role conflict experiences.

The quantitative data were gathered via a questionnaire mailing to 141 student affairs middle managers in Massachusetts and Connecticut who were identified through various professional association directories. Total usable returns numbered eighty-two or 58 percent of the 141 questionnaires mailed. The qualitative

interview data were gathered from twelve subjects selected from the overall eighty-two comprising the study sample. The interviews were conducted through use of an open-ended interview guide.

The non-parametric Friedman Two-Way Analysis of Variance of Ranks in conjunction with the Wilcoxon Matched-Pairs Signed-Ranks Test identified significant differences in degree of experienced role conflict among the four role conflict types. Additionally, the non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis One-Way Analysis of Variance of Ranks identified significant differences by position type for two of the role conflict situations represented by questionnaire items. Finally, qualitative analysis identified general themes in the interview data.

Discussion of these findings resulted in the following conclusions:

1. Student affairs middle managers experience different types of role conflict to different degrees as follows: Person-Role conflict (Low); Intra-Sender conflict (Low); Inter-Role conflict (Moderate); Inter-Sender conflict (Moderate)
2. Preliminary analysis for differences in degree of role conflict experienced due to position, years in position and age indicated significant differences by position for role conflict situations involving time pressures and working with diverse people
3. The degree to which student affairs middle managers experience role conflict does not appear to justify its consideration as a major issue for that group.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Problem Overview

One of the major problems which has plagued the student affairs field throughout its history has been a continuing inability to clearly conceptualize a role statement. The result has been a sometimes glaring disparity between rhetorical goals and actual practices:

While student personnel workers have professed themselves to be educators and to be interested in the whole student, they have served higher education essentially as housekeepers, activities advisors, counselors and have been viewed by many in the higher education arena as petty administrators.¹

The rhetoric has included arguments for the roles of administrator, service provider, educator, student advocate and human development specialist. The numerous variations on these basic themes have been accompanied by equally diverse programmatic practices. Additionally, this situation has been exacerbated much of the time when practices have been inconsistent with whatever role definition upon which they were allegedly based. The result has been a great deal of confusion and disagreement within the field as to the appropriate role of student affairs practitioners. This situation serves to stimulate a cycle of new attempts at role definition, varied interpretations, varied and inconsistent practices and ongoing disagreement.

In the absence of any clear and consistent role formulation from within the field, the various campus elements and related constituencies have developed and articulated their own expectations of student affairs workers. A potential consequence of this situation is that "the expectations of the mission and functions of student personnel services held by other members of the academic community may be in opposition to the expectations held by many student personnel professionals."² Carpenter et al. contend that these conflicting expectations exist and that these expectations are not even consistent among themselves, let alone being consistent with those of student affairs workers: "Students, administrators, faculty members and the public at large . . . hold disparate views of the responsibilities inherent in the field of student affairs."³ Student affairs has been characterized as "caught in the crossfire between administrative expectations to control student behavior and student demands for increased control over the conditions of student life."⁴ From another perspective, it is asserted that "student personnel is never-never land; faculty think it's administration and administrators think it's faculty."⁵ Finally, a view from within the field asks "which one of us has not had to carry out an assigned responsibility . . . without facing the conflicting expectations of the chief business officer and the Dean of the Faculty . . . and . . . the shifting moods of a President?"⁶ The end result is a state in which multiple and conflicting expectations of the role of student affairs is a reality which practitioners face.

The literature of the field includes various efforts to clearly identify and discuss this issue. The work of Mary Evelyn Dewey is one example. Her basic contention is that "the field has no clear definition of function acceptable to the educational field at large."⁷ Her assessment of the situation is as follows:

New attempts at role definition appear periodically as do new constructs for services. . . . Old arguments are resurrected and restated. . . . all in all, a serious reader of the literature is given the impression of vaulting idealism alternating with discouraged despair, interspersed with horrifying periods of becalmed inertia and startling complacency. If any pattern is to be discerned in this, it is a circular one. As the arguments repeat, the suggested solutions recur, while the issues remain constant.⁸

Another example of an effort to draw attention to and discuss this issue is the work of Kathleen Plato. She uses the following characterization in her effort to explain the process of revising role statements in student affairs:

The reform cycle has been described as a cyclical process. A "crisis" develops and current theory is not adequate for proposing a solution. The "old" approach is condemned and a "new" approach is advanced. The new approach is met with enthusiasm because the group has a specific need to change. The new approach becomes the dominant approach as the need for change is satisfied. There is no additional movement to find other alternatives, because the need for change has been satisfied. Proponents of the new approach can instigate very minimal reforms or they can eventually fall back into former practices without notice. The approach prevails longer than it is applicable and a new crisis develops.⁹

Perhaps Humphries' premise, in his discussion of student affairs practitioners' roles, is the most salient point of departure for

discussions of the type noted above. He simply asks "what is the precise status of the student personnel administrator?"¹⁰

Historical Overview

Historical attempts to formulate role definitions in response to questions of status began with the Hopkins Report in 1926. This characterized the student affairs worker as a provider of educational support services which would individualize the student's higher education experience.¹¹ This early perspective was offered in a context in which student services were administered by faculty in some institutions and by professional staff hired specifically for such work in others.

The issuance of The Student Personnel Point of View by the American Council on Education in 1937, and 1949 represents two significant attempts to formulate role statements for the field.¹² It was in these publications that the first thought to the effect that student affairs work should be viewed as the province of non-faculty educational specialists was seen. All of the literature in the subsequent two decades dealt with imbuing student services with this "point of view" which included concern for individual differences, holistic development and non-intellectual aspects of learning and development.¹³ This perspective was included in the work of all of

the major writers of that period such as Lloyd-Jones, Williamson, and Mueller.¹⁴

Finally, in the late sixties and early seventies, the most recent major reconceptualization of student affairs roles was stimulated. The Hazen Foundation report in 1968 and Brown's monograph in 1972 established the basis for the past decade's efforts to refine and establish the role of human development specialist as the dominant one in student affairs.¹⁵

Current Study

Overview

The issue of role definition in student affairs has led researchers to investigate perceptions regarding the role of the field. The views of student affairs workers themselves as well as those of other members of the academic community have been examined through these efforts. While it has been noted how this examination reveals variation and disagreement over role definition, little data are available which address the issue of role conflict in student affairs. In other words, data are available relative to the varied theoretical role formulations as well as the perceptions of actual role behavior in the student affairs realm. However, data are lacking which systematically assess and/or describe the reality of the job experience in student affairs. There have also been few attempts to

apply theoretical perspectives which might assist in understanding such data.

To address this gap in the literature, this study provides data on the self-reported role conflict of student affairs middle managers. Role conflict is defined as the simultaneous occurrence of two or more role expectations such that compliance with one would make compliance with the others more difficult.¹⁶ Wolfe and Snoek distinguish role conflict as either objective or subjective.¹⁷ This distinction draws on the work of French and Kahn who describe two significant dimensions of the environment as the objective social environment and the psychological environment:

Following the distinctions drawn by Lewin . . . and Cartwright . . . we conceive of the life space, defined as all those factors affecting behavior at a given moment, as consisting primarily of the psychological environment of the person. The objective environment will affect the psychological behavior of the person only insofar as it subsequently enters the life space and becomes a part of the psychological environment.¹⁸

The categories of Wolfe and Snoek distinguish role conflict as evident in the objective environment from role conflict experienced in the psychological environment:

- a) Objective role conflict exists when the pressures are in opposite directions
- b) Subjective role conflict refers to the experience of conflict aroused as a result of a set of role pressures¹⁹

This current study examined "subjective" or experienced role conflict. The focus on student affairs middle managers, which will be

discussed fully in a subsequent section, is due to the stance that they are likely to experience substantial role conflict.

The data for this study was gathered from a sample of four-year college student affairs middle managers. Quantitative data was gathered via a questionnaire mailing while qualitative data was gathered via a series of interviews. Analysis of the former was done utilizing appropriate statistical techniques available in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences while analysis of the latter involved the application of qualitative analysis. The discussion of results in each case utilized role theory as a framework within which interpretations and conclusions were developed.

A Focus on Middle Management: Role Conflict Compounded

Katz and Kahn have alluded to the likelihood of role conflict in middle management as follows:

Roles . . . become more complex when they require the . . . person to be simultaneously involved in two or more subsystems, since each is likely to have its own priorities and to some degree its own subculture. . . . Members of middle management are likely to be . . . involved in the crossing of subsystem boundaries.²⁰

Monnett has stated that the experience of role conflict is likely to be a major element in the work of student affairs middle managers.²¹ He described student affairs middle managers as those individuals who have authority over the various service departments within a division of student affairs and who report directly to a

chief student affairs officer.²² They may supervise other professional and/or clerical staff or may be single-person departments. A common listing of such individuals might include the following:

- a) Director of Admissions
- b) Director of Counseling
- c) Director of Financial Aid
- d) Director of Housing
- e) Director of Placement
- f) Director of Student Activities
- g) Director of Veterans Affairs

Monnett's rationale for the likelihood of experienced role conflict for these positions is as follows:

By nature of the profession . . . the traditional role of providing support services for many elements of the academic system places the student personnel service area coordinator in the position of participating in a very large role set whose members may have conflicting expectations of the roles of student personnel services. Consequently, he may perceive a variety of conflicting pressures from a great number of legitimate role senders who wish him to change his behavior to conform to their values and goals.²³

Snoek's research on role strain in diversified role sets substantiates Monnett's position. Snoek's view is noted below:

The greater the diversity of organizational positions occupied by the individual's day-to-day associates, the greater the likelihood that his associates will hold conflicting goals, values and expectations. The person whose work role is characterized by such a diversity of orientations among his role senders is more apt to experience difficulty in integrating their role expectations. . . . At the top of the list are direct role conflicts.²⁴

Thus, Monnett sees a large and diverse role set as inherent in the job of the student affairs middle manager. Monnett's contention of the likelihood that the student affairs middle manager will experience a variety of conflicting role expectations as a function of his/her position is substantiated by Snoek's research on role strain in such diversified role sets.

Summary

The foregoing discussion has noted how the student affairs field in general can be characterized as one in which continuing debate and disagreement over role definition is a central concern. A resultant likelihood of substantial role conflict experiences for student affairs middle managers has been purported. This study addressed the lack of data on how student affairs practitioners experience their jobs while focusing particularly on middle managers. This study utilized role theory as a theoretical perspective to assist in understanding both quantitative and qualitative data gathered on the experience of role conflict in student affairs work.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to address the lack of data on how student affairs middle managers experience one likely major dimension of their work: role conflict. The utilization of role theory as a

theoretical framework to assist in understanding the data gathered for the study has been noted. Although role theory has served as a theoretical perspective for many research efforts in both business and educational settings, a review of the literature revealed very few studies focusing on subjective role conflict among college student affairs workers. Therefore, a secondary purpose of this study was to provide a new application of this theoretical perspective. The particular focus on middle managers provided a place to start in implementing this new approach to the historical problem of role definition in student affairs.

The underlying rationale for this proposed research approach was to provide a more in-depth understanding of how role issues impact practitioners' job experiences. It is hoped that such understanding will contribute to more committed and more knowledgeable efforts to achieve clarity and agreement as to the role of student affairs in higher education.

It is also hoped that this new application of role theory will increase the awareness of others in the field concerning the potential of such theory for helping to better understand the experience of working in student affairs. Perhaps then others will also be stimulated to conduct related research which may contribute to resolving the role issues which have characterized the field in the past.

Significance of the Study

In his study of role conflict and role ambiguity among student affairs middle managers at community colleges, Monnett stated the following:

Although numerous well-funded studies have been conducted concerning the perceptions and opinions of various organization members regarding the desired definition of student personnel roles, virtually no empirical research has been conducted on role conflict and role ambiguity among college student personnel professionals.²⁵

This current study is significant because it addresses the paucity of research on role conflict in student affairs. In other words, the significance of this study lies in its provision of data which deal with the reality of the job experience in student affairs as well as its utilization of role theory as a theoretical perspective for understanding such data.

From another perspective, the nature of previous research dealing with experienced role conflict can be summarized as follows:

Recent evidence has demonstrated . . . that objective antecedents residing in the organizational context and requirements of the role appear to predict the level of general role conflict experienced by the focal person. Evidence has been reported of direct relationships between the degree of role conflict a focal person experiences on the job and various work-related outcomes including job-related tension and anxiety, job dissatisfaction, futility, propensity to leave, lack of confidence in the organization, inability to influence decision-making and unfavorable attitudes toward role senders.²⁶

The preceding passage illustrates how most of the previous research on role conflict has been limited in scope. In other words, "the generalized role conflict variable, frequently considered in recent research in organizational behavior, may serve to obscure the real nature of the conflict an individual experiences on the job."²⁷

Clearly, most of the previous research dealing with experienced role conflict has been limited to assessing the degree to which an individual experiences role conflict generally as well as identifying predictors and outcomes of this phenomenon. However, it is also useful to consider that "it is possible, in fact likely, that two persons may experience the same degree of general role conflict but the specific . . . types . . . they experience may be quite different."²⁸

Although Rizzo et al.²⁹ developed measures of the role conflict types delineated by Kahn et al.³⁰, few researchers have reported results on the basis of these more specific measures. A comprehensive review of the literature shows only Miles³¹ as well as Miles and Perreault³² to have utilized these more specific measures. Since this current study also reports results of these more specific measures, an additional element of significance is included in its design as it goes beyond the common approach of measuring the degree to which only general role conflict is experienced.

Finally, this in-depth examination of role conflict achieved via assessing the degree to which specific types of role conflict are

experienced is supplemented by qualitative data which describes the nature of selected role conflict experiences.

Limitations Of the Study

1. The sample for this study included student affairs middle managers from only Massachusetts and Connecticut.
2. This study did not examine the data assessing degree of role conflict for differences by sex. Since the discussion of findings compares certain results to those of Kahn et al.,³³ which was a male sample only, this distinction may provide additional insight.
3. The secondary research question of this study is exploratory in nature. While examining the data in this study for differences by position type, years in current position and age, the overriding purpose was to assess the potential for future research considering other such demographic variables. The selection of the particular variables for this study were based solely on this writer's professional experience rather than any review of pertinent literature. Therefore, the findings presented relative to this research question must be properly viewed as preliminary in nature while providing a basis for more substantial research in the future.
4. The purpose of qualitative methodology is to provide in-depth, organized description of a phenomenon under study. The results

of qualitative analysis are not intended to be conclusions for generalization. The qualitative component of this study provides detailed description of selected role conflict experiences which supplements the quantitative assessment of role conflict.

Definition of Major Role Concepts Used in the Study

Role: A set of behaviors expected of an individual occupying a given position in an organization³⁴

Role Conflict: The simultaneous occurrence of two or more role expectations such that compliance with one would make compliance with the others more difficult³⁵

Person-Role Conflict: Situations in which there is a conflict between a person's internal values or standards and the required role behavior of his/her job³⁶

Intra-Sender Conflict: Situations in which requests and prohibitions from a single source conflict. Such a source may be another person or established organization policy. Such situations involve conflicts between role requirements, and the time, resources or capabilities of the individual³⁷

Inter-Role Conflict: Situations in which conflicts occur due to the individual being required to assume several roles which require either incompatible behaviors or different behavior as a function of the situation³⁸

Inter-Sender Conflict: Situations in which conflicts occur for the individual between requests or evaluations of two or more others³⁹

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The literature included in this review was identified via a comprehensive computer search of the following databases: ERIC, Psychological Abstracts, Management Index, Dissertation Abstracts International, Sociological Abstracts and Social Science Index. This review consists of four major sections. The Status of Student Affairs Work in Higher Education will trace the history of efforts to formulate a definition of role for student affairs; will illustrate efforts to identify and discuss issues related to role definition for the field; and will present research efforts which assess the perceptions of student affairs workers and others in higher education regarding role definition. Role Theory will present the major concepts of role theory used as a theoretical backdrop for this study.

Related Research will present research dealing with role conflict generally. Since many studies investigate role conflict and role ambiguity jointly, research results concerning this other major role stressor will be noted. Role Conflict in Middle Management includes both research and discussion which has focused on role conflict for this particular group.

The Status of Student Affairs Work in Higher Education

Historical Attempts at Role Definition

It is generally agreed that a report issued by L. B. Hopkins in 1926 constitutes the essential beginning of a role statement for the field of student affairs work in higher education. Personnel Procedure in Education summarized a study of fourteen institutions relative to their efforts in the realm of "personnel administration." At this time personnel administration was conceived of as any effort to do "more toward individualizing the educational process."⁴⁰ The description of such efforts shows student affairs work to have its origins in the provision of support services. It is important to recognize that this initial role formulation deals with the functions of personnel administration. This function was performed by faculty in some institutions and by staff hired especially for such work in others.

Hopkins' study is generally credited with being the first comprehensive listing of various service areas which are now seen as comprising student affairs work. Hopkins also made an effort to discuss the role of these services vis a vis the academic enterprise. He stated that "one might question how this differs from the concept of education itself. I do not assume that it does differ."⁴¹ He also alludes to the famous "Student Personnel Point of View" to be developed in the future in that he claimed to be "sure there will be

general acceptance of the theory that it is the point of view activating the work that is of real significance."⁴² This perspective would prove to be troublesome as less emphasis was placed on implementing such a role in practice. At any rate, the practices of the time were seen as a novel approach in the realm of higher education:

The technique is but a new approach to solving the ancient problem of bringing into our institutions those who may profit most by what we have to offer, and then working with them in such a manner that each individual, the least fortunate as well as the most fortunate, may gain as much as possible from his attendance at that institution.⁴³

The essence of Hopkins' work was echoed five years later in the next major attempt to define the role of student affairs work. The Report of the Committee on Personnel Principles and Functions of the American College Personnel Association was issued by Robert C. Clothier in 1931. Among its aims was the intent to prepare a statement of basic principles for personnel work.⁴⁴ Additionally, performance of the student affairs function by various campus groups was seen as integral:

The heart of personnel work lies in the genuine and intelligent interest of instructors and others in the individual student. Its ends are well served if the instructor thinks of his subject as a means of teaching the student, poorly served if he thinks of the student as a means of teaching his subject. Its purposes are advanced if those services outside the classroom which remove obstacles and help him make the most of his college career are well organized and operating effectively, retarded if not.⁴⁵

The issuance of The Student Personnel Point of View in 1937 by the American Council on Education is another benchmark in the evolution of a role definition for student affairs work. It was the most sophisticated effort to date while also being the first to argue that student affairs work should be the province of non-faculty educational specialists. The rationale for this perspective included the ongoing growth of higher education institutions and increased faculty emphasis on research activities. In short, the Student Personnel Point of View or "PPV" was explained as follows:

It is the task of colleges and universities . . . to assist the student in developing to the limits of his [sic] potentialities and in making his [sic] contributions to the betterment of society. This philosophy imposes upon educational institutions the obligation to consider the student as a whole. . . . It puts emphasis, in brief, upon the development of the student as a person rather than upon his intellectual training alone.⁴⁶

A revision of the PPV issued in 1949 essentially echoed the perspective of its predecessor concerning the role of student affairs work.

The work of Esther Lloyd-Jones in the fifties constituted a fresh frame of reference for student affairs work. Her ideas represent the beginning of a movement away from central emphasis on promoting a point of view. She sought to develop the heretofore missing connection between rhetorical goals and actual practices:

The primary problem, of course, in determining whether personnel work will influence and improve education, lies in the question of whether personnel workers themselves are content with the status quo or whether they believe education can be further improved. It is not easy for

personnel workers, who have been taught the formula that personnel work consists of providing a certain collection of services to students, to revise their thinking, their roles, and their programs in terms of the philosophical, sociological and psychological issues. . . . There are, however, many creative educators among personnel workers who believe that they can, through their special skills and interests, make some fundamental contributions at the point of educational purposes and methods in the situations in which they work.⁴⁷

The significant aspect to her approach is the view that student affairs work should design its programs with an educational role as primary. Lloyd-Jones re-emphasized this stance in 1954 with the publication of her most famous work entitled Student Personnel Work as Deeper Teaching.⁴⁸

The early sixties marked the publication of two comprehensive texts for the study of student personnel work. E.G. Williamson made a strong effort to build a case for the role of student personnel worker as educator but his description of support services fell short of this goal. Although he stated that he was concerned with "the incorporation into services of new knowledge of human nature and its development,"⁴⁹ there is no evidence that this was occurring or any suggestions as to how it might occur. The historical inability to develop a stable role formulation and move on to implementing it is evident in the ambiguity of Williamson's assertion concerning the field:

But it is not restricted to one method or technique or program. Rather it is as broad in purposes and methods as is the range of human nature, as wide as the ever-

expanding and deepening knowledge of human nature, and as deep as our slowly increasing fund of verified knowledge of ways and means to aid individuals in developing optimally through the organized learning experiences available in our colleges and universities. Our task is to uncover and evaluate the administrative processes and techniques necessary in managing the many services in day-to-day relationships with students.⁵⁰

Kate Mueller's work generally followed Williamson's approach although she provided one of the more sophisticated discussions of the developmental tasks of college students up to that point in time.⁵¹

Barry and Wolf's contribution to the literature in 1963 emphatically eliminated any delusions that role issues in student affairs were nearing resolution. They clearly stated why the historical process of defining the role of student affairs work had been a sterile one:

Currently, some personnel workers are expressing considerable dissatisfaction with the services concept of their work. Some of them are criticizing the type of personnel work that partitions the student, while others are earnestly trying to implement the concept of personnel work that views the "whole person." Still others are discussing an integrated approach to personnel work that might make it more completely a part of the total educational process. Frequently, however, these new attempts are either too nebulous to permit adequate implementation or simply old ideas in modern guise. All too often the people who are trying to formulate new approaches are operating within service-oriented institutions and are unable to view the work functionally in other terms. These dissatisfactions and new attempts, however, comprise the bases of the modern issues in college personnel work.⁵²

Although their criticism was not well received in the field, their reaction was to note the words of George Santayana: "We may be frightened at first to learn on what thin ice we have been skating . . . but we shall not be in worse plight for knowing it, only wiser today and safer tomorrow."⁵³

The figurative ice did not really start to thicken until the late sixties with the publication of the Hazen Foundation report. This position paper provided a sophisticated discussion of education for holistic development in and outside of the classroom as a major responsibility for higher education. In essence, the often alleged role of student affairs work was given both substance and validity:

Thus the committee does not take issue with the traditional emphasis of higher education on intellectual development, but it finds most definitions of intellect and most understandings of how it is to be developed far too narrow. . . . Thus that form of intellectual development which has no visible impact on the individual's life, his values, feelings, goals, and deeds, is relatively sterile and undesirable. . . . The out of classroom environment presents highly important opportunities at least as strong and influential as those found in the 15 - 18 hours a week spent in the classroom. . . . If the classroom is a place where important matters are discussed or where the search for values goes forward, so to must the campus be. The two must, in fact, be one, demonstrating a consistent relationship that is clear to the student.⁵⁴

This spirit was continued in the student affairs literature itself with the publication of Robert D. Brown's monograph on student development in 1972. This watershed publication regarding the student development approach formed the basis for a decade's work in refining and establishing student development as the accepted role for the

field. Most significant was Brown's delineation of what can be termed suggested role requirements for student development educators:

1. Assessing behaviors the student has already developed
2. Formulating the student's behavioral objectives
3. Selecting college programs that build on existing behaviors to accomplish the student's objectives
4. Fostering student growth within the context of his own cultural background and encouraging his appreciation of the cultural backgrounds of the educational institution and of other students
5. Developing physical environments, human groups, institutional organizations, and financial resources most conducive to the student's growth
6. Integrating concurrent experiences outside the institution with the student's educational program as an aid in achieving the student's educational objectives
7. Modifying existing behaviors that block the further growth of the student
8. Giving visibility to a value system that enables the student to judge the worth of behavior patterns
9. Recording the student's progress as a means of facilitating his growth
10. Identifying appropriate environments for continued development before and after the student leaves his present educational setting⁵⁵

Brown also pointed out that student affairs workers must deal with the obstacles in translating this newly adopted role formulation into reality:

If the student personnel professional wishes to have significant input and influence on student development patterns of the future, its individual members are going to have to revise their own self-perceptions and the perceptions that others have of them. . . . Acceptance of student development as a

major goal means tackling the problems associated with bringing it into reality. . . . First, there is the need to reaffirm and testify to the validity of the goal, then comes a commitment to create an environment for student development.⁵⁶

The response of the student affairs field was to develop a plethora of models and specific role requirements. Representative efforts in this regard were undertaken by The American College Personnel Association; The Council of Student Personnel Associations; Miller and Prince; Parker; Kneflelkamp, Widick and Parker; Giroux et al.; Newton and Ender; Morrill, Hurst and Oetting; Creamer; and Chickering.⁵⁷ While the role of student development appears to be accepted and various strategies for enacting it exist, Kuh's assessment of the current state of the art leads him to conclude that it is questionable "whether developmental theory based interventions have substantially altered the orientation and activities of the student affairs profession."⁵⁸

Issues Related to Role Definition

As previously noted, the literature of the student affairs field includes many efforts to pinpoint and analyze the issues involved with formulating a definitive role student for the field. These efforts can be classified in three major categories alluded to in the introductory section of this discussion. These categories are described below:

1. Discussion related to acceptance of the student affairs field as a legitimate member of the higher education community
2. Concern over professional status for the student affairs field
3. The multiple and varied expectations placed on student affairs workers

These categories are not totally discrete yet they are useful for organizing and presenting the literature addressing the issues raised relative to role definition in student affairs.

Acceptance of the student affairs field. The discussion over acceptance of the field by the higher educational community is characterized by Knott as follows:

Too often, especially in the recent past, we have spent our energies in hand-wringing self-analysis and lamentations over our feelings of second-class citizenship on campus and later in propagating new and fresh (translate the same old) ideals for student affairs operatives.⁵⁹

Dewey has stated that the field has no clear role and as a result receives little acceptance or recognition by students, faculty or administration.⁶⁰ McConnell asserts that "one reason why personnel workers are missing the action is that they are still not considered to be educationally necessary or even useful."⁶¹ Hodgkinson notes that Deans of Students are seen by faculty and students as providers of support services not primary to the educational mission of the college or university.⁶²

Arguments in support of acceptance or legitimization have taken varied tacts. Humphries notices that student affairs work is "a tradition whose roots are inextricably enmeshed in American higher education history"⁶³ while also noting that "the precise role the student personnel professional is to play in higher education administration is still uncertain."⁶⁴ Humphries has also asked if the role is even needed and whether it should retain second-class citizenship.⁶⁵ Davis also utilized a historical perspective while investigating the origins of the title of "Dean." He asserted that both the title and functions associated with it "precede the association of the term with the head administrator of an academic unit by at least several centuries."⁶⁶ More recently, Crookston argued for role clarity and acceptance via revising the jargon used to describe the field. His position on this nomenclature dilemma is summarized as follows:

There are important distinctions that must be made, not only for our own peace of mind but also for the benefit of faculty, administrators, parents, students and the public. . . . Student affairs is not a philosophy, theory or concept; it is an area, sector or administrative subdivision. . . . Calling the sector student development is bound to unnecessarily raise the territorial hackles of academicians who can rightfully claim that student development is also their proper business, a claim with which we should all heartily agree.⁶⁷

In contrast to the generally accepted views presented by Crookston, Shetlin proposed revision of the reward system within the field in order to gain acceptance from those on the outside. Schetlin felt

those individuals working directly with students should be accorded greater pay and prestige. In her words, "student personnel workers will never convince others of the importance of their work . . . until they themselves value highly those working directly and successfully with students."⁶⁸

Much discussion in recent years has focused on the "student development" approach as a means to legitimize the field's position in higher education. It has been stated that this focus "has lead to the rapid expansion of a knowledge base . . . as well as a range of process models."⁶⁹ This knowledge base has stimulated calls for the development of "academic competencies," such as teaching and research, by student affairs workers.⁷⁰ At the same, the literature suggests that the student development approach has not been implemented in practice.⁷¹ Kuh has stated that "whether developmental theory based interventions have substantially altered the orientation and activities of the student affairs profession is questionable."⁷² Clemens and Akers have offered this perspective:

Rather than allotting more time and effort to rephrasing and reordering purposes and goals for the profession in general, professionals on each campus must begin to identify, articulate and state publicly their commitments. . . . and to implement programs to accomplish them.⁷³

Silverman adds that "the student personnel worker has an important role to play, . . . but will he [sic] take advantage of the situation?"⁷⁴

While the preceding discussion has represented the variety of existing views concerning a focal perspective from which to discuss role definition in student affairs, the following discussion reviews perhaps the most sustained theme in the literature regarding acceptance of the field as a legitimate component of higher education.

Professional status for student affairs. The issue of professional status for the student affairs field has been a major concern. Bloland notes that "for years, student personnel administrators have attempted through professional associations, national meetings, publications and graduate training to build a professional identity."⁷⁵ However, authors such as Wrenn, Cowley, Koile, Shoben, Penny and Dewey have argued against profession status while criticizing student affairs training, practice, literature and image.⁷⁶ For example, Koile asserted that "there is no defined body of knowledge, skills, and ethics of professional practice . . . that would, constitute the basis for a profession."⁷⁷ Shoben noted that "the grounds . . . for its transforming itself from an attitude . . . into a distinctive occupation . . . remain unclear and less than fully rationalized."⁷⁸

On the other hand, other writers have ascribed profession status to the field. This perspective has been represented by Williamson, Trueblood, Miller and Nygreen among others.⁷⁹ In describing the role of the student affairs worker as educator, Miller noted that this role "implies the professionalization of the field."⁸⁰ Nygreen argued in favor of profession status as follows:

We can distinguish trends toward increasing professionalization in the emphasis upon a high degree of generalized and systematic knowledge, in a primary orientation toward community interest rather than individual self-interest, and in the attempts through voluntary associations and work socialization to develop a higher degree of self-control of behavior.⁸¹

The more recent discussions have offered a middle-ground perspective. Carpenter et al. note that "student affairs work is moving ever closer to the profession end of the profession-occupation continuum and deserves to be called an emerging profession."⁸² Stamatakos' analysis of the issue concluded that student affairs work is "enroute to professional status."⁸³ Finally, Sandeen contends that "while student affairs has not fully matured as a profession, it is clearly in its most healthy state since our beginnings."⁸⁴

The attention given professionalism as well as the variety of other issues noted in the foregoing literature review seems not to have allowed progress toward role definition but rather has become an obstacle preventing direct attention to be given role issues. Carpenter et al. point out that "the forementioned dissonance in role definition is echoed in the question of professionalism."⁸⁵ Perhaps this is why recent efforts have included more concrete approaches to establishing a role for the field:

As the field of student affairs faces the last two decades of the twentieth century, there is evidence that the desire to achieve professional status in a complete sense has been replaced with a realization that a rational explication of a body of knowledge and skills must come first.⁸⁶

However, the literature still indicates that the inability of the student affairs field to formulate a clear role definition results in varied role expectations from others which in turn hamper the efforts of the field to establish itself.

Varied role expectations for student affairs. Monnett proposed that role expectations for student affairs by other segments of higher education may conflict with role expectations held within the field.⁸⁷ Carpenter et al. supported this view while also illustrating that this disagreement extends to within the field as well.⁸⁸ Silverman's analysis is that "personnel workers are peripherally related to the . . . campus' diverse elements. . . . The personnel worker will entertain a great deal of conflicting expectations."⁸⁹ Wallenfeldt addresses the issue by characterizing the chief student affairs officer as a "marginal man":

The chief student affairs officer is not a full partner in the institutional organization. The C.S.A.O. is a marginal man [sic] who serves as a transitional link between the official institution . . . and . . . the students. . . . Credibility to both constituencies depends upon how the C.S.A.O. balances behaviors with respect to frequently conflicting norms.⁹⁰

Penny stated that "any . . . delineation of his [sic] task confronts the student personnel worker with a conflict between the goals that his profession embraces and the functions that his institution assigns him."⁹¹ Nygreen urges efforts by professional associations to "help shape role expectations and thereby mitigate the conflicting demands upon the individual occupant of a student personnel administrator

post."⁹² Miller describes the multiple expectations on a broader scale in that "we have . . . a major division within the academic community often misunderstood and misinterpreted from both within and without."⁹³ This "major division" is aptly described as "an impressively large complex of operations with a vague ill-defined purpose."⁹⁴

Research regarding Role Definition

The preceding sections have reviewed student affairs literature regarding efforts to formulate a definition of role while also considering relevant background issues. It was noted in the course of this review how multiple and varied role expectations have resulted from these efforts. These theoretical role expectations on the part of student affairs workers and others have been "largely the product of individual rumination."⁹⁵ On the other hand, there have been some efforts to systematically study perceptions of the actual role status of student affairs workers. An early study by Blackburn found that chief student affairs officers' perceptions of their departments' roles were related to their educational preparation and length of experience.⁹⁶ Hodgkinson's data showed both faculty and students viewing student affairs as support services for the primary academic activities of the institution.⁹⁷ Dutton et al. studied the perception of the Dean of Students' role by Presidents, faculty and students. While this study generally found Deans and Presidents in agreement,

"Deans . . . were found to be more likely than Presidents to say that the Dean's primary responsibility was to students rather than to the institution."⁹⁸

While Bucci's study of student activities staff indicated approximately 75 percent are not accorded faculty status benefits such as tenure or sabbatical leave, Fisher and Packwood found that over 50 percent of all student affairs staff were members of the faculty unit as per collective bargaining agreements.⁹⁹ Furthermore, this latter study showed 27 percent of faculty respondents in favor of student affairs workers' inclusion in the unit while nearly 50 percent of student affairs staff favored inclusion.¹⁰⁰ The relevance of such studies to the present discussion lies in their provision of evidence as to role status perceived for student affairs workers by those in and outside of the field. Similar studies by Borland and Aaron provide additional data for this perspective.¹⁰¹

Harway's study of the administration of private liberal arts colleges resulted in findings similar to those reported by Hodgkinson. Harway's results indicated that college presidents communicated significantly less with student affairs administrators, due to perceptions of support roles served by this group, than with academic administrators.¹⁰²

Role Theory

Background

Kahn has referred to role theory as "that source of still unrealized theoretical promise."¹⁰³ Kahn and Quinn have stated that "speculative essays, laboratory experiments, and field studies relevant to role stress make up a scattered body of theory and research that has to date produced very limited common approaches and concepts."¹⁰⁴ The theoretical orientation developed by Kahn et al.¹⁰⁵ was utilized in this study as the primary theoretical framework in that a preliminary review of literature indicated their work to represent the most significant effort to develop an integrated and mature theoretical backdrop for the study of role issues. Since Kahn and Quinn have also declared that most research utilizing role theory has not been explicit regarding its "theoretical antecedents,"¹⁰⁶ the background material presented at the outset of the following review of role theory is appropriate.

Literature

Rizzo et al. have noted certain principles from classical organization theory which relate to role theory. They describe these principles as follows:

According to the chain-of-command principle, organizations set up on the basis of hierarchical relationships . . . should be more satisfying to members and should result in more effective economic performance and goal achievement. . . . The principle of unity of command states that for any action an employee should receive orders from one superior only, and that there should be only one leader and one plan for a group of activities having the same objective.¹⁰⁷

The relationship to role theory is then described in this way:

Role theory states that, when the behaviors expected of an individual are inconsistent - one kind of role conflict - he will experience stress, become dissatisfied, and perform less effectively. . . . Role conflict can therefore be seen as resulting from violation of the two classical principles and causing decreased individual satisfaction and decreased organizational effectiveness.¹⁰⁸

Kahn et al. describe human organizations as systems of roles. Organizations are seen as "stable, socially contrived, interrelated patterns of behavior."¹⁰⁹ Since the focus is on human organizations, the behavioral patterns are obviously enacted by individuals. The concept of "office" is used to locate each individual within this totality of human interactions and relationships. The individual's office or position or job is described in this way:

A particular point in organizational space; space in turn is defined in terms of a structure of interrelated offices and the pattern of activities associated with them. Office is essentially a relational concept, defining each position in terms of its relationship to others and to the system as a whole. ¹¹⁰

Each office has a set of activities associated with it or behaviors expected of any individual occupying it.¹¹¹ As noted previously, these activities or behaviors constitute the "role" associated with that office.

The degree to which offices in an organization are related will obviously vary. The nature of the relationships between a given office and other offices determine if the individuals in these offices are seen as members of the "role set" of a given individual. "People in an organization who have expectations regarding the behavior of an individual in a particular role constitute the role set associated with that role."¹¹² "The term 'focal person' is used to refer to any individual whose role or office is under consideration."¹¹³ The relationship between focal person and role set is a significant one:

All members of a person's role set depend upon his performance in some fashion; they are rewarded by it or they require it in order to perform their own tasks. Because they have a stake in his performance, they develop beliefs and attitudes about what he should and should not do as part of his role. The prescriptions and proscriptions held by members of a role set are designated as role expectations.¹¹⁴

Role expectations, however, do not remain in the minds of the members of the role set. On the contrary, they are usually communicated to the focal person in some way. Rommetveit refers to members of a role set as "role senders" and to their communicated expectations as the "sent role."¹¹⁵ Moreover, this communication is not intended to be merely informational but rather aims to influence

the focal person to conform with role expectations. As a result, these communicated role expectations are characterized as "role pressures."¹¹⁶ These role pressures may assume the form of "instructions about preferred behaviors, and behaviors to be avoided, information about rewards and penalties contingent on role performance, and evaluations of current performance in relation to role expectations."¹¹⁷

The response of the focal person to role pressures is explained utilizing the concept of "role forces":

Thus for any person in the organization there is not only a sent role, consisting of the pressures which are communicated by his role set, but also a "received role," consisting of his perceptions and cognitions of what was sent. . . . It is the received role . . . which is the immediate influence on his behavior and the immediate source of his motivation to role performance. Each sent pressure can be regarded as arousing in the focal person a psychological force of some magnitude and direction . . . called role forces.¹¹⁸

The actual behavioral response or "role behavior" of the focal person is described as behavior which is relevant to the system or organization, though not necessarily congruent with the expectations of others, and which is performed by someone who is recognized as a member of the organization.¹¹⁹

The occurrence of the sequence of role expectations, role pressures, received role and role behavior constitute a "role episode."¹²⁰ While this conceptualization illustrates one dimension of causality, the progression from role expectations to role behaviors

is in fact part of a larger ongoing and interdependent cyclical process: "The response of the focal person feeds back to each sender in ways that alter or reinforce that sender's expectations and subsequent role-sending."¹²¹ Most important is the understanding that this process does not take place in isolation. It is shaped or influenced by several contextual factors - individual, interpersonal and organizational.¹²² An overview of the role episode and its context is depicted in figure 1.

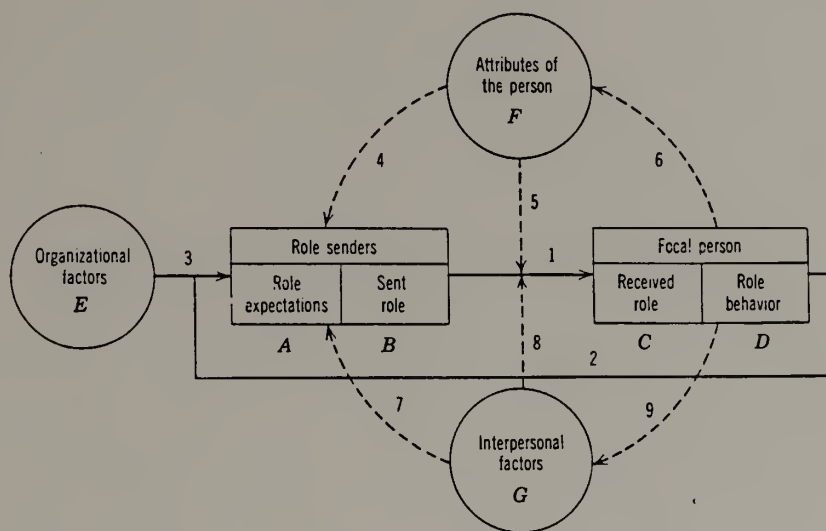


Figure 1. The Role Episode and Its Context

SOURCE: Daniel Katz and Robert L. Kahn, The Social Psychology of Organizations (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1978): 196, figure 7-1.

Figure 1 indicates that the attributes of the focal person and interpersonal relations with the role set are affected by role behavior. In turn these two contextual factors affect both the role-sending and role-receiving aspects of the process. The broader

organizational context is also depicted as influencing the development and sending of role expectations at the outset of the overall process.

Mention of the organizational context and the individual attributes of the focal person alludes to two important concepts discussed by Kahn and Quinn concerning the sources of role stress. "Reflexive role expectations" are described as "those expectations that a role occupant holds for himself concerning his role behavior."¹²³ This concept is useful in understanding role stress which cannot be understood solely in terms of factors in the organizational environment. Additionally, the concept of "expectation-resource discrepancies" is utilized to describe situations in which otherwise conflict-free expectations become the source of role stress if the focal person does not have adequate resources to meet these expectations.¹²⁴ This concept includes both individual ability and time as well as other organizational resources under the general heading of "resources."

The particular form of role stress focused on in this study is role conflict. As previously noted, role conflict is defined as the simultaneous occurrence of two or more role expectations such that compliance with one would make compliance with the others more difficult.¹²⁵ This study utilizes a conceptualization of role conflict types drawn from the work of Kahn et al. and Rizzo et al. These types have been described previously in this study and are labeled as follows: Person-Role conflict, Intra-Sender conflict, Inter-Role conflict, Inter-Sender conflict. Lastly, the distinction

made by Wolfe and Snoek between objective role conflict as that which is evident in the environment external to the individual as opposed to subjective role conflict or that which is experienced by the individual, has been noted in describing the focus of this study.

Although this study does not deal with the other major form of role stress noted in the literature, it is useful to briefly note it and note how it is distinguished from role conflict. Role ambiguity is described as follows:

In its prototypical form, role ambiguity simply means uncertainty about what the occupant of a particular office is supposed to do. But there may be uncertainty as well about . . . the membership of the role set, the ends to be served by role enactment, and the evaluation of present role behavior.¹²⁶

While the stress in role conflict is rooted essentially in an incompatibility of expectations, role ambiguity is primarily due to an inadequacy concerning role-related information. Such an inadequacy might mean that role information is "incomplete or non-existent, subject to more than one interpretation, or momentarily clear but rapidly changing."¹²⁷

Related Research

The comprehensive research effort of Kahn et al. included quantitative data from a nationwide survey of the male labor force as well as qualitative data from a series of intensive case studies.

Generally speaking, the findings of this study indicated that the experience of role conflict and role ambiguity result in job dissatisfaction and increased job-related tension as well as weaker interpersonal relations.¹²⁸ Wolfe and Snoek reported essentially the same findings while investigating various outcomes of subjective role conflict.¹²⁹ Snoek's assertion concerning the effect of diversified role sets was that "one important source of role strain is the requirement to maintain working relationships with persons in a wide variety of complementary roles."¹³⁰

An earlier research effort by Getzels and Guba dealing with role conflict among military officers who also served as teachers noted the importance of the role set by concluding that the individual "cannot long ignore the legitimate expectations of others upon him without retaliation from them."¹³¹ Other early research efforts investigated the relationship of role conflict to various personal outcomes including job satisfaction. Utilizing a case study approach of managers' behavior in response to role conflict, Dalton classified managers as strong or weak.¹³² Strong managers were distinguished by a greater tolerance for role conflict as well as by the ability to moderate the impact of work conflicts in their personal lives. Gross et al. studied school superintendents and reported a negative correlation between role conflict and job satisfaction while Gullahorn found that unresolved role conflicts among union members are associated with an increasing tendency to view problems unrealistically.¹³³

More recently, House and Rizzo investigated role conflict and role ambiguity as significant variables in a model of organizational behavior. Their findings indicated the experience of role conflict to be negatively related to perceptions of organization effectiveness while role ambiguity was negatively related to perceived organizational effectiveness and satisfaction while being positively related to propensity to leave the organization.¹³⁴ Rizzo et al. reported similar results to those of House and Rizzo while also providing evidence that the constructs of role conflict and role ambiguity are "factorially identifiable and independent."¹³⁵ In a study of nursing aids and assistants, Brief and Aldag found role conflict and ambiguity to be positively related to anxiety, tension and propensity to leave the organization.¹³⁶ Tosi's study of managerial personnel also reported a positive correlation between role conflict and job threat anxiety and a negative correlation between role conflict and job satisfaction.¹³⁷ Additionally, Tosi and Tosi studied elementary and secondary school teachers enrolled in a graduate course relative to participation in decision-making, role conflict and role ambiguity. This study found an inverse relationship between participation and each of these role stressors.¹³⁸

Other research designs have sought to study the moderating effects of certain variables and the relationships between role conflict, role ambiguity and various outcomes of these role stressors. For example, Johnson and Stinson's research among military and civil service personnel found that the need for achievement moderates

relationships between inter-sender conflict and job satisfaction.¹³⁹ Mosholder et al. examined the moderating effects of organizational level and self-esteem on the relationship between role conflict, role ambiguity and employee satisfaction and performance. These findings reported that the negative effects of role conflict on performance of support personnel are moderated by high self-esteem while the negative effects of role ambiguity on satisfaction of support personnel are also moderated by high self-esteem.¹⁴⁰ Another study by Morris and Koch examined the comparative influence of role conflict and role ambiguity on organizational commitment, job involvement and work-related psychosomatic illness across three employee groupings consisting of professional, clerical and manual workers. These results indicated that there are differences in the comparative influence of these role stressors on the stated outcomes generally as well as across the employee groupings.¹⁴¹

The relatively sparse research on role stress in higher education includes Maier's study which reported an inverse relationship between role conflict and role ambiguity and the degree of job satisfaction experienced by community college administrators.¹⁴² Upton's study of community college faculty and trustees' expectations of college presidents found no relationship between degree of role conflict and faculty job satisfaction.¹⁴³ However, faculty reporting low degrees of role conflict generally reported greater confidence in their institution's leadership.¹⁴⁴

Additional role conflict research in higher education will be included in the section focusing on role conflict in middle management.

Much of the research dealing with role conflict and role ambiguity alludes to a causal relationship between these role stressors and various outcomes. Miles investigated this question and concluded that there is a causal relationship between role conflict, role ambiguity and job satisfaction and attitudes toward role senders.¹⁴⁵ However, the direction of this causal relationship could not be determined on the basis of this study.¹⁴⁶ In another study, Miles investigated the role stress of research and development professionals. This study found role conflict to be more sensitive than role ambiguity to the respondents' job requirements.¹⁴⁷ This study also found integration and boundary-spanning activities to be better predictors of role conflict experiences than supervisory activities.¹⁴⁸ Miles and Perrault also applied a cluster analysis to the data and concluded that "individuals vary considerably in the nature of role conflict they experience."¹⁴⁹

Role Conflict in Middle Management

In a discussion of middle management in mental health organizations, Dressler described the potential for role conflict. A more precise description would note this discussion to be focusing on inter-role conflict:

In a very real sense, the manager is in the middle. . . . A potential confrontation may therefore result when the manager attempts to simultaneously meet the institution's demands . . . and comply with the staff's expectations. . . . In practice, there is an inherent difficulty when the same person simultaneously attempts to meet task needs of the organization and . . . needs of its personnel.¹⁵⁰

Another perspective is presented in the comprehensive study by Kahn et al. which found 90 percent of the middle managers responding to be experiencing high degrees of role conflict.¹⁵¹ As will be more fully illustrated in the discussion of results of this current study, Kahn et al. were in fact describing the person-role conflict experiences of middle managers. Kahn et al. stated that this high degree of role conflict for middle managers is "likely the result of interaction between . . . job demands and the intense but as yet unsatisfied mobility aspirations"¹⁵² of middle managers.

Scott's study of collegiate middle managers alluded to the potential for role conflict in this way:

Their constituents send conflicting signals to them. Middle managers are to be servants to students and faculty . . . and instruments of institutional policy set by senior administrators and trustees. They are to be both servants (as support staff) and policeman (as monitors of procedures).¹⁵³

Troutman studied the particular academic middle management position of department chairperson at one institution. This survey examined differential role perceptions and perceived criteria for selection of these middle managers by surveying selected administrators, faculty

and past and present department chairpersons. The findings indicated differences among these three groups on various dimensions within each of the two topics.¹⁵⁴ Carroll also utilized department chairpersons in a study of the relationship between role conflict and satisfaction. Carroll found an inverse relationship between these two variables.¹⁵⁵

Non-academic higher education middle managers were studied by Medrano regarding their experience of role conflict, role ambiguity and job related tension. The findings of this study indicated that job related tension is predicted better by role conflict than role ambiguity; role conflict and job related tension are positive related; and role conflict and role ambiguity are not related.¹⁵⁶ Lastly, Monnett studied the degree of role conflict and role ambiguity experienced by student affairs middle managers at community colleges relative to job threat anxiety, job satisfaction, influence in decision-making and inclusion in faculty collective bargaining units. Monnett summarized his findings by stating that "significant but weak relationships exist between the . . . role variables of conflict and ambiguity and certain job involvement variables which previous studies have shown to moderate the degree of organizational effectiveness."¹⁵⁷

Summary

This review of literature illustrates the difficulties encountered by the student affairs field in its quest to arrive at a definitive role statement. The review of research also illustrates

the relative dearth of research in higher education concerning role conflict but particularly so for the student affairs area. This evidence forms the basis for this study.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Design

Overview

The purpose of this study was to address the lack of data on the role conflict experiences of student affairs middle managers. The primary component of the study utilized a quantitative questionnaire in order to assess the degree of various types of role conflict experienced by a sample of this group. Non-parametric statistical procedures were utilized to test for differences in degree of role conflict between the various role conflict types as well as to test for differences of degree within each role conflict type by position type, years in current position and age. These three variables were chosen due to this writer's professional experience in student affairs having included observation, discussion and interaction with colleagues which suggested the experience of role conflict to be differential due to differences in positions, years in position and age. The inclusion of this component in the research design was undertaken with the intent of it being a preliminary effort to systematically explore this writer's experiential deductions. Additionally, supplementary qualitative interview data were also

gathered to provide in-depth description of the nature of individual role conflict experiences.

Rationale

The relevance of a primary quantitative focus has been noted by Alfred North Whitehead:

Through and through the world is infested with quantity: To talk sense is to talk quantities. It is no use saying the nation is large - How large? It is no use saying that radium is scarce - How scarce? You cannot evade quantity. You may fly to poetry and music, and quantity and number will face you in your rhythms and your octaves.¹⁵⁸

It has also been stated that "the advantage of a quantitative approach is that it is possible to measure the reactions of many subjects to a limited set of questions thus facilitating comparison and . . . aggregation of the data."¹⁵⁹ The aggregation of data was achieved in this study via the questionnaire while comparisons were made via the statistical procedures as noted above.

On the other hand, the supplementary qualitative interview data was included to provide description of individual role conflict experiences. The qualitative approach attempts primarily to answer the question of "what are the characteristics of a social phenomenon, the forms it assumes, the variations it displays?"¹⁶⁰ It refers to research approaches such as in-depth interviewing "which allow the researcher to obtain first-hand knowledge about the empirical social world in question."¹⁶¹

Qualitative methodology is rooted in the phenomenological perspective on research in the social sciences. This emphasizes understanding the subjects' perspectives from their point of view. A fundamental doctrine upon which this and other related methodological approaches are based is the notion of "verstehen." The essence of this perspective is noted in the following passage:

The verstehen tradition stresses understanding that focuses on the meaning of human behavior, the context of social interaction, an empathetic understanding based on subjective experience, and the connections between subjective states and behavior.¹⁶²

Patton illustrates how qualitative research incorporates this perspective as follows:

A qualitative approach to measurement seeks to capture what people have to say in their own words. Qualitative measures describe the experiences of people in-depth. The data are open-ended in order to find out what people's lives, experiences and interactions mean to them in their own terms and in their natural settings.¹⁶³

The rationale for combining quantitative and qualitative components in one study also bears discussion. Light and Pilmer have offered the following comments in this regard: "We think it worthwhile . . . to work hard toward building an alliance of evidence, including both quantitative and descriptive elements while maintaining the integrity of each. . . . One obstacle is a polarized view of numbers and words."¹⁶⁴ Cook and Leviton address this polarization by stating that "what we have, then, is a difference in priorities about two types of questions, each of which has value. Science needs to

know its stubborn, dependable, general 'facts,' and it also needs databased, contingent puzzles that push ahead theory."¹⁶⁵ Thus, a quantitative research component allows the researcher "to generalize characteristics from his set of data to a larger population"¹⁶⁶ while qualitative findings are properly viewed as working hypotheses "to be tested again in the next encounter and again in the encounter after that."¹⁶⁷

This current study, while including both quantitative and qualitative elements, was not designed such that there be any analytical connection between these components nor any integration of their findings. However, the quantitative mean role conflict scores for the interview subjects are presented in the discussion of interview subject selection as they provide relevant background data. Nonetheless, the design of this study incorporated a focus on the quantitative assessment of student affairs middle managers' role conflict experiences. This assessment consisted of the primary research question regarding differential degrees of role conflict between role conflict types and a secondary research question regarding differential degrees of each role conflict type due to position type, years in current position and age. The supplemental qualitative data was included to provide in-depth description of the nature of selected individual role conflict experiences.

Subjects

Rationale

The particular student affairs middle managers selected for this study are Directors of Student Activities and Directors of Housing at four-year institutions of higher education. The reason for selecting individuals in these particular positions is based on this writer's personal experiences and observations while working in the student affairs field. Individuals in each of these positions typically interact with a large variety of other members of the academic community concerning an equally diverse set of issues. For example, Directors of Housing interact with students, housing staff, student affairs colleagues, student affairs superiors, faculty, campus security, physical plant, business offices and other administrators in the course of performing their duties. These interactions can involve issues of residence programming, counseling, discipline, maintenance and personnel supervision. Directors of Student Activities also interact with many of the groups noted above in addition to a multitude of formal student organizations. Some typical issues inherent in the interactions of these individuals include social, recreational and cultural programming, student leadership training, managing the student activities fund, supervising student center facilities and coordinating special programs such as new student orientation, commencement and foreign student advising.

As already noted in the introductory section of this study, it has been purported that role conflicts are likely to occur when a range of associations such as those described above characterize an individual's experiences on the job. This likelihood, in conjunction with the purpose of this study to address the lack of data concerning the experience of role conflict in student affairs, is the basis for utilizing these two particular position types in this study.

Subjects: Quantitative Data

The particular individuals selected to complete the quantitative questionnaire were identified using the following professional association directories: The National Entertainment and Campus Activities Association Directory; The Association of College Unions-International Region I Directory; The Association of College and University Housing Officers Directory; The Boston Association of College Housing Administrators Directory; The National Association of Student Personnel Administrators Region I Membership Handbook. These directories were reviewed for all institutions in Massachusetts and Connecticut listing individuals occupying the positions of Director of Student Activities and Director of Housing. This review resulted in the identification of seventy-one Directors of Student Activities and seventy Directors of Housing for a total of 141 quantitative questionnaire recipients.

Ninety-nine questionnaires were returned to constitute a 70 percent response rate. After excluding seventeen questionnaires due to unclear responses, incomplete demographic data or failure to meet the definition of student affairs middle manager, the actual sample of middle managers for the quantitative component of this study consisted of thirty-nine Directors of Student Activities and forty-three Directors of Housing for a total of eighty-two subjects or 58 percent of the initial 141 questionnaire recipients. Tables 1 and 2 show the breakdowns by years in current position and age, respectively, for these eighty-two subjects.

TABLE 1
YEARS IN CURRENT POSITION OF SAMPLE

Category	Subjects
Less than 1 year	16
1 to 3 years	30
4 to 6 years	17
7 or more years	19
Total	82

Table 1 above shows the breakdown by years in current position to be essentially even across three categories while the one to three years grouping is nearly double the size of each of the other groupings.

Table 2 below shows the breakdown by age to be unevenly distributed in the greater age categories.

TABLE 2
AGE OF SAMPLE

Category	Subjects
Less than 22	0
22 to 25	9
26 to 30	19
Over 30	54
Total	82

Subjects: Qualitative Component

The derivation of interview subjects from the overall sample involved consideration of several characteristics of the sample. The quantitative questionnaire asked if respondents would be willing to be interviewed. Table 3 presents data showing the breakdown of subjects in the sample regarding their willingness to be interviewed. The data in table 3 show a substantial portion of each position type were either willing or undecided concerning interview participation. As a result, the fifty subjects in these two categories were a sufficient

amount to draw on. Actually, the selection process to be described below resulted in only one subject, a Director of Housing, having to be drawn from the undecided category.

TABLE 3
WILLINGNESS OF SAMPLE REGARDING INTERVIEW

Category	Subjects		
	Activities	Housing	Total
Willing	17	9	26
Undecided	8	16	24
Unwilling	14	18	32
Total	39	43	82

The process for narrowing this group to the goal of six subjects of each position type began by identifying subjects in each position category who had indicated at least a moderate degree of role conflict on a minimum of four of the questionnaire items. The meaning of such frequency descriptors as "moderate" and the calculation of role conflict scores will be explained in detail in the instrumentation section. The minimum degree specified was to assure that interview subjects would have sufficient information to participate in an in-depth interview while the minimum number of items to be discussed

was determined to be a reasonable amount in the course of the interview pilot studies which will also be described in the instrumentation section. The potential interview subjects were further narrowed by including subjects whose usable responses allowed the overall grouping of interviewees to have as evenly balanced a distribution of each of the questionnaire items as possible. The final determinant in deriving the desired twelve qualitative subjects was geographic proximity to this writer in an effort to reduce both the travel time and resultant costs inherent in conducting the interviews.

The breakdowns by position type, years in current position and age for the twelve actual interviewees are presented in table 4.

TABLE 4
DEMOGRAPHICS OF QUALITATIVE SUBJECTS

Categories	Subjects
Activities	6
Housing	6
Less than 1 year in position	4
1 to 3 years in position	6
4 to 6 years in position	1
7 or more years in position	1
Less than 22 years old	0
22 to 25 years old	1
26 to 30 years old	2
Over 30 years old	9

Table 4, while showing the equal distribution by position type for the qualitative subjects, also shows ten of twelve were in their current positions for three years or less and eleven of twelve were twenty-six years old at minimum.

Lastly, table 5 below presents the quantitative mean role conflict scores for each of the role conflict types for the twelve interview subjects. As noted earlier, this data is presented to provide relevant background on the interviewees. No analytical connection was sought between these data and the qualitative data gathered from these subjects. As also noted previously, the calculation of mean role conflict type scores and the development of frequency descriptors will be discussed in the instrumentation section.

TABLE 5
MEAN ROLE CONFLICT SCORES OF QUALITATIVE SUBJECTS

Role Conflict Type	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Frequency Descriptor
Person-Role	3.17	.67	Low
Intra-Sender	2.83	.72	Low
Inter-Role	4.75	.87	High
Inter-Sender	4.83	.99	High

Table 5 data show the qualitative subjects to experience person-role conflict and intra-sender conflict at low frequency while inter-sender and inter-role conflict to be experienced at high frequency.

Instrumentation

Overview

Two instruments were used in conducting this study. A two-part questionnaire was utilized to gather quantitative data while an interview guide was used to gather qualitative interview data. Copies of each of these instruments are included in appendix A and appendix B, respectively.

Quantitative Questionnaire

The first section of the quantitative questionnaire included items requesting information on administrative responsibility and supervision received as well as data on position type, years in current position and age. The first two categories were included to assure that all subjects included in the study sample identified initially by job title in fact met the definition of student affairs middle manager as specific earlier in the introductory chapter for this study.

The second section of the questionnaire consisted of the role conflict measures developed by Rizzo et al.¹⁶⁸ Permission to utilize these measures was received from Sidney Lirtzman via a telephone call on December 9, 1983. A copy of the written authorization received from Professor Lirtzman, dated December 12, 1983, is included in appendix C. The role conflict items of Rizzo et al. were used to measure the degree to which the four role conflict types utilized in this study were experienced. This was accomplished by asking respondents to indicate the degree to which they experienced the situation described by each questionnaire item on a seven-point frequency scale used by Medrano¹⁶⁹ in his 1978 employment of the Rizzo et al. items. The response categories of this scale were "Never," "Almost Never," "Seldom," "Occasionally," "Often," "Almost Always" and "Always." Additionally, Rizzo et al. identified groupings of their role conflict items which represented measures of the four role conflict types.¹⁷⁰ This correspondence between items and the role conflict types is as follows: Person-Role conflict - Items 2, 3, 12, 13; Intra-Sender conflict - Items 1, 5, 6, 7, 8; Inter-Role conflict - Items 4, 9; Inter-sender conflict - Items 10, 11. Since the complete instrument developed by Rizzo et al. included items relative to role ambiguity as well as role conflict, the role conflict items noted above are designated by numbers which represent their sequence on the questionnaire used for this current study.

Miles and Perrault illustrated that these specific role conflict type scores can be derived by calculating the mean of the scores of all individual items representative of a role conflict type.¹⁷¹ This procedure was utilized in this current study after responses were coded from "1" (Never) to "7" (Always). Missing responses were coded "0" and excluded from computation. The coding of responses to Items 1, 4, 8, and 13 was reversed since these four items were worded in a positive direction. Since the role conflict type scores were rounded to the nearest hundreth, the following score ranges and corresponding frequency descriptors were developed so that scores could be described in narrative fashion based on the original seven-point frequency scale: 1.00-1.49 = "None"; 1.50-2.49 = "Very low"; 2.50-3.49 = "Low"; 3.50-4.49 = "Moderate"; 4.50-5.49 = "High"; 5.50-6.49 = "Very high"; 6.50-7.00 = "Constant." The original response categories ranging from "Never" to "Always" were not used as frequency descriptors due to the reversed coding of four items as noted. For example, a person-role conflict score in the range of 2.50-3.49 is derived from four individual item scores. In the case of three of these items (2, 3, 12), a response of "Never" would be coded "1" while the same response to the remaining item (13) would be coded "7." Therefore, in order to maintain both the integrity of the original responses and the flexibility to describe all role conflict scores consistently, the frequency descriptor "Low" would be used.

Reliability and validity. Although this study focuses on role conflict, the complete instrument that was developed by Rizzo et al. includes measures of both role conflict and role ambiguity. The factorial independence of the respective role conflict and role ambiguity items was established by testing them on a total of 290 managers in the central office and engineering division of a large corporation:

Using an image covariance method and verimax criterion rotation, the responses were factor analyzed in order to test relationships to the perceived role conflict and role ambiguity definitions. This factor analysis resulted in the extraction of two factors which accounted for 56 percent of the common variance of the thirty-item set.¹⁷²

In addition, the following was indicated:

The factor analysis revealed that the two factors extracted strongly paralleled the two theoretical concepts of perceived role conflict and role ambiguity; therefore, the unexamined yet often presumed separation of the two constructs seems warranted.¹⁷³

The role conflict items were also tested for reliability by Rizzo et al. using Kuder-Richardson internal consistency reliabilities with Spearman-Brown corrections. The results were described as follows: "A reliability coefficient of .816 and correction coefficient of .820 were reported for all role conflict-item splits while coefficients of .780 and .808 respectively were reported for perceived role ambiguity."¹⁷⁴ Rizzo et al. also noted that they found a high and consistent construct validity in this instrument.¹⁷⁵ This

was determined using a product-moment approach to assess the correlations between their role conflict and role ambiguity items and several measures of organization structure, climate and leader behavior that would be expected to be correlated with the existence of role conflict and ambiguity.¹⁷⁶

Since the seven-point scale response categories used in this current study are those developed by Medrano as opposed to those used by Rizzo et al. with the original instrument, this writer is aware that such modification may effect the reliability and validity data reported above. Although there is no data available as to any such effects, it is useful to note that a reliability analysis was done on the items as employed in this current study resulting in an unequal length Spearman-Brown reliability coefficient of .721 being reported.

Qualitative Interview Guide

The interview guide employed in this study was designed to be consistent with a qualitative approach. Bogdan and Taylor have noted that "qualitative methodology refers to research procedures which produce descriptive data."¹⁷⁷ The particular qualitative research methodology used in this study was open-ended interviewing. The interviews were organized through the use of a general interview guide. The interview guide provided a framework within which the interview could develop:

An interview guide is a list of questions or issues that are to be explored in the course of the interview. An interview guide is prepared in order to make sure that basically the same information is obtained from a number of people by covering the same material. . . . Thus, the interviewer remains free to build a conversation within a particular subject area, to word questions spontaneously, and to establish a conversational style - but with the focus on a particular subject that has been predetermined.¹⁷⁸

While question and wording variations may be appropriate, one invariable principle of qualitative interviewing is the open-ended response format:

The interviewer never supplies and pre-determines the phrases or categories that must be used by respondents to express themselves. . . . This is what distinguishes qualitative interviewing from the closed interview, questionnaire, or test typically used in quantitative evaluations. Such closed instruments force program participants to fit their knowledge, experiences and feelings into evaluators' categories. The fundamental principle of qualitative interviewing is to provide a framework within which the respondents can express their own understandings in their own terms.¹⁷⁹

The qualitative questions contained in the interview guide were designed to examine the four types of role conflict experiences as formulated by Kahn et al. and Rizzo et al.¹⁸⁰ This is consistent with the purpose of this study to address the lack of data on how student affairs practitioners experience one likely major dimension of their work: role conflict. In keeping with this goal, the interview guide

questions were designed to solicit descriptive data in the form of individuals' perceptions concerning various aspects of their role conflict experiences. The structure of all questions in the interview guide incorporates Patton's suggestions: "For purposes of qualitative measurement, good questions should, at a minimum, be open-ended, neutral, singular and clear."¹⁸¹ As previously noted, a copy of the interview guide is located in appendix B.

Pilot testing. Three student affairs middle managers, two Directors of Student Activities and one Director of Housing, at colleges nearby this writer were solicited and agreed to serve as pilot subjects for the interviews. These three individuals also agreed to participate in a follow-up group meeting to review the interview format.

The procedures for conducting the pilot interviews included delivery of the quantitative questionnaire and a cover letter (see appendix D) of instructions. The completed questionnaires were collected and examined in order to prepare specific content and format for each pilot interview. All items on the interview guide were tested during the course of the pilot interviews. The interviews were scheduled via telephone calls to each of the subjects which covered the following: the general process and content of the interview; review of human subjects' provisions in the study;¹⁸² establishment of a date, time and location. A letter confirming the interview and reviewing all information shared over the telephone was delivered to each pilot subject as well (see appendix E).

Each of the interviews was taped and transcribed. Transcriptions were reviewed against the tapes to insure the former's accuracy. This writer then reviewed each item in the interview guide for clarity and usefulness while considering the quality of the data obtained relative to the quality of data hoped for. Appropriate refinements to the guide were made at this stage.

Finally, the pilot subjects were contacted via telephone to establish a date, time and location for review of the interview guide and screening survey. This review took place in a group meeting attended by this writer and the three pilot subjects. All subjects were asked to prepare evaluations of the interview and bring them to the group meeting along with a copy of the interview guide used in their own interview. This material was left with the subjects upon completion of their individual interviews. The group meeting involved discussion of the original guide, considered any refinements proposed by both the researcher and the group, and concluded when suggestions for improvements were exhausted. Appropriate refinements were made on the basis of the group meeting.

Procedure

Quantitative Data Collection

In March of 1984 the quantitative questionnaire and cover letter were mailed to the 141 subjects identified per the process noted

earlier in this chapter. A stamped return addressed envelope was included to facilitate response. Each questionnaire was numbered in order that respondents could be identified by the researcher for any follow-up correspondence while maintaining individual confidentiality. The ninety-nine returned questionnaires were reviewed for unclear and/or incomplete responses. In addition, the demographic data were also reviewed on each questionnaire to assess if respondents met the definition of student affairs middle managers as specified in this study. As noted earlier, student affairs middle managers were specified as those individuals who have authority over a student affairs service department and who report directly to a chief student affairs officer.¹⁸³ Seventeen questionnaires were excluded via this review leaving eighty-two subjects to constitute the final quantitative sample.

The questionnaire responses from these subjects were then recorded and coded per the scheme described in the instrumentation section. All data was then input for computer statistical analysis via the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences.

Interviews

The twelve individuals identified per the process described earlier were contacted by telephone to solicit participation in interviews and establish a date, time, and location for the interviews. All twelve agreed to participate. In addition to

scheduling details, the general process and content of the interviews were discussed as were the provisions for human subjects included in this aspect of the study. These provisions consisted of the following information to be shared with all subjects:

1. This writer's motives in conducting the study and the planned use of the data
2. The subject's confidentiality would be respected throughout the study
3. The subject's right to not respond to any topics or questions and to withdraw from the study at any time
4. The subject's right of access to the raw data used (i.e. tape recording of interview) from his/her participation in the study
5. The subject's right, upon request, to receive a copy of the conclusions reached in the study

A confirmatory letter including scheduling details, interview preparation suggestions, and other relevant information was sent to each subject in advance of the interview.

Each interview was planned based on quantitative questionnaire responses such that a minimum of four questionnaire items would be covered. Again, this number was determined as reasonable during the pilot interviews. The specific minimum items to be explored in each interview was determined by utilizing the earlier stated criteria of a minimum frequency of "moderate" and a desire for a balanced representation of quantitative questionnaire item content in the

overall interview data. Once this minimum was achieved, the balance of each interview was used to discuss additional role conflict items which met the criteria noted above. The interview format noted was flexible and allowed for variation based on the interests and desires of individual interviewees. The average length of the interviews was ninety minutes.

All interviews were taped and then transcribed for qualitative analysis. All transcriptions were reviewed for accuracy against the tapes before qualitative analysis was begun.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

The main purpose of this study was to address the lack of data on how student affairs middle managers experience role conflict. The primary research question examined differences in degree of role conflict between the four role conflict types utilized in this study. These types were as follows: Person-Role conflict, Intra-Sender conflict, Inter-Role conflict and Inter-Sender conflict. The secondary research question examined differences in degree of each type of role conflict by position, years in current position and age. Supplemental interviews were also conducted with selected subjects to provide descriptive data on individual role conflict experiences.

The data for the two research questions noted above were gathered via a quantitative questionnaire sent to Directors of Student Activities and Directors of Housing. The qualitative interview data were gathered via the use of an interview guide.

This chapter presents the results of statistical analysis of the data for each of the two quantitative research questions as well as discussion pursuant to those results. The statistical procedures utilized relative to each question are described at the beginning of each section focusing on the respective questions. Additionally, this

chapter includes a summary of general themes found in the interview data along with illustrative interview content.

Role Conflict Differences by Type

Statistics

Examination of the data for statistically significant differences between the degree of role conflict measured for each of the four role conflict types was accomplished through use of the Friedman Two-Way Analysis of Variance of Ranks. This nonparametric statistical procedure is called a two-way analysis of variance but it is more analogous to the parametric one-way ANOVA than to the parametric two-way ANOVA.¹⁸⁴ This is because this test is used to investigate for statistically significant differences among a group of mean ranks of scores while the parametric one-way ANOVA is used to investigate for statistically significant differences among a group of mean scores. Furthermore, since the Friedman test is appropriate for situations in which the same subjects are measured repeatedly, it is suited to address the primary research question of this study.¹⁸⁵ In essence, this question involves comparing the degree of role conflict for the sample across the different role conflict types. The Friedman Two-Way Analysis of Variance of Ranks indicated the existence of any statistically significant differences among the mean ranks of scores for the role conflict types. However, the Friedman test will not

identify specific paired differences between sets of measures. A follow-up procedure to the Friedman test was needed in order to achieve this goal.

A recommended procedure to proceed beyond the Friedman ANOVA is the Wilcoxon Matched-Pairs Signed-Ranks Test.¹⁸⁶ This test was applied to identify significant differences among all pairings of role conflict types. It did so by comparing mean ranks for all positive and negative differences in the role conflict scores of each pairing of role conflict types.

Results

The mean role conflict scores for the four role conflict types presented in table 6 summarize the questionnaire responses of the total student affairs middle managers sample surveyed for this study. The degree of role conflict indicated by these mean scores is characterized by the appropriate frequency descriptor per the scheme described in the method chapter.

These descriptive statistics show person-role conflict and intra-sender conflict to be experienced at low frequency while inter-role conflict and inter-sender conflict are experienced at moderate frequency.

TABLE 6
ROLE CONFLICT TYPES: MEAN ROLE CONFLICT SCORES

Type	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Frequency Descriptor
Person-Role	3.16	.82	Low
Intra-Sender	2.82	.92	Low
Inter-Role	3.77	1.22	Moderate
Inter-Sender	3.85	1.14	Moderate

NOTE: The mean scores included in the table were computed from the scores of the eighty-two subjects in the study sample.

The Friedman Two-Way Analysis of Variance of Ranks was used to test for statistically significant differences among the mean ranks of scores for the four role conflict types. The results of the Friedman test are presented in table 7.

The significance value of .000 reported by the Friedman ANOVA indicates the existence of statistically significant differences at the .01 level among certain pairings of the means ranks of the role conflict scores for the four role conflict types. In other words, these results indicate that student affairs middle managers do experience the different types of role conflict to different degrees.

TABLE 7
 ROLE CONFLICT TYPE COMPARISONS:
 FRIEDMAN TWO-WAY ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE

PR	INTRA	INTERR	INTERS	Chi-square	Significance Value
Mean Rank 2.23	1.71	2.93	3.13	66.15	.000

NOTES: The mean ranks were computed using the role conflict scores of the eighty-two subjects in the study sample. Average ranks were assigned in the case of ties.

The role conflict types are indicated by these designations: PR=Person-Role Conflict; INTRAS=Intra-Sender Conflict; INTERR=Inter-Role Conflict; INTERS=Inter-Sender Conflict.

However, since the Friedman test results did not identify specific paired differences, the Wilcoxon Matched-Pairs Signed-Ranks Test was applied in order to identify statistically significant differences between specific pairs of mean ranks of scores for the four types of role conflict. Table 8 presents the results of the Wilcoxon test applied to each role conflict type pairing.

The reported significance values presented in table 8 indicate that all of the role conflict pairings, other than the inter-role conflict and inter-sender conflict one, differ significantly at the .01 level. In other words, these results indicate that student affairs middle managers experience each of the role conflict types to significantly different degrees with the one exception noted.

TABLE 8
ROLE CONFLICT TYPE COMPARISONS:
WILCOXON MATCHED-PAIRS SIGNED-RANKS TEST

Pairing [*]	Mean Rank (+)	Mean Rank (-)	Z	Significance Value
PR/INTRAS	32.27	42.71	-3.82	.000
PR/INTERR	41.10	29.00	-4.04	.000
PR/INTERS	39.16	30.39	-5.18	.000
INTRAS/INTERR	44.37	23.38	-6.39	.000
INTRAS/INTERS	45.45	18.53	-6.27	.000
INTERR/INTERS	34.56	38.92	-.384	.701

NOTE: The (+) and (-) symbols identify the mean rank for all positive and negative differences in the eighty-two subjects' role conflict scores in each pairing of role conflict types. Average ranks were assigned in the case of ties in ranks of differences.

* PR=Person-Role Conflict; INTRAS=Intra-Sender Conflict; INTERR=Inter-Role Conflict; INTERS=Inter-Sender Conflict.

As noted previously, inter-role conflict and inter-sender conflict are both experienced at moderate frequency while person-role conflict and intra-sender conflict are experienced at low frequency. The two types of role conflict which the findings of this study indicate are experienced to the greatest degree by student affairs middle managers have been defined as follows:

a) Inter-Role Conflict: This occurs when the role pressures associated with involvement in one group or relationship are in conflict with pressures stemming from involvement in other groups or relationships

b) Inter-Sender Conflict: This occurs when pressures from one role sender oppose pressures from one or more other role senders

In the case of these two role conflict types, the source of conflict is the pressures or expectations of members of the role set. Kahn and Quinn utilize the term "expectation-generated stress" to describe stressors, such as these two role conflict types, which find their source in the expectations of role senders.¹⁸⁷

The finding in this study that student affairs middle managers experience these two expectation-generated stressors at greater frequency than any others can be explained by considering the essential nature of their positions as noted earlier in this study. This writer has cited personal experience in the student affairs field to support the contention that student affairs middle managers typically interact with a variety of individuals and departments in an institution of higher education. Additionally, a study by John Monnett was cited which asserted that the student affairs middle manager has "a very large role set whose members may have conflicting expectations of the roles of student personnel services."¹⁸⁸ Finally, Snoek's research on role strain in diversified role sets substantiates Monnett's position:

The greater the diversity of organizational positions occupied by the individual's day-to-day associates, the greater the likelihood that his associates will hold conflicting goals, values and expectations.¹⁸⁹

The large and diverse role set as a major element of the student affairs middle manager's work experience suggests the likelihood for

expectation-generated stressors being experienced at higher frequencies than the other types. This likelihood was borne out by the findings of this study which indicated both inter-role and inter-sender conflict to be experienced at a higher frequency (moderate) than the other two role conflict types (person-role conflict and intra-sender conflict). Therefore, it is plausible to identify role set diversity, noted above as characteristic of student affairs middle managers, as one explanation of why inter-role conflict and inter-sender conflict are experienced at relatively higher frequency than the other two role conflict types.

Person-role conflict has been noted to be experienced at low frequency by student affairs middle managers on the basis of the findings of this study. Person-role conflict has been described to include situations in which there is a conflict between a person's internal standards or values and the required role behavior of his or her job. Thus, the source of this type of role conflict is accurately seen as pressures or expectations external to the individual in conjunction with characteristics of the individual. Kahn and Quinn discuss "reflexive role expectations" as those expectations which an individual holds for himself/herself concerning role behavior.¹⁹⁰ They elaborate on this point in the following passage:

Not all role expectations are properties of the role occupant's social environment; some are instead properties of the role occupant himself. An individual's values, for example, provide internalized standards for his behavior which can be regarded as role expectations he holds for himself. . . . The concept of reflexive role sending is necessary in understanding stressors

that cannot be analyzed in environmental terms alone. For example, many studies treat role conflict, not as a conflict of expectations among role senders, but as a conflict of expectations of role senders and the expectations the focal person holds for himself.¹⁹¹

The studies referred to in the last sentence of the preceding passage would be more specifically described as focusing on person-role conflict. The other category of role conflict which student affairs middle managers experience at low frequency is intra-sender conflict.

Intra-sender conflict represents situations in which requests and prohibitions from one source conflict. These situations involve conflicts between role requirements and the time, resources or capabilities of the individual. The work of Kahn and Quinn once again provides a relevant theoretical backdrop for discussion of this role conflict type. Their analysis of the sources of role stress includes the concept of "expectation-resource discrepancies." They offer this perspective:

Even completely unambiguous and conflict-free expectations may be a source of stress if the role occupant does not have at his disposal adequate resources with which to comply with these expectations. There are two major points of origin of such resources: the focal person himself, and his organizational environment . . . a role occupant's abilities can be regarded as a resource, as can organizational resources.¹⁹²

This conceptualization subsumes individual capabilities, time and other organizational resources under the general category of "resources."

The preceding discussion has noted that person-role conflict and intra-sender conflict are not experienced as frequently as other types of role conflict based on this study's findings. One interpretation of this finding is possible by considering the respective sources of these two types of role conflict in conjunction with the concept of "achievement motivation." McClelland et al. describe achievement motivation as involving the pursuit of a goal defined as "success in competition with a standard of excellence."¹⁹³ McClelland also notes that such a standard could involve competition with others or self-evaluation relative to one's own standards. Kahn et al. utilize the concepts of "status-achievement" and "expertise-achievement" to distinguish these two aspects of achievement motivation. In their study on role stress, Kahn et al. describe the expertise-achievement individual as one "who indicated that he [sic] sought satisfaction in his job through doing well in job-related activities irrespective of any ancillary awards."¹⁹⁴ This also includes the individual "who indicated he [sic] was drawn to his job because it presented challenging tasks or provided an opportunity for the exercise of valued personal skills."¹⁹⁵ On the other hand, the status-achievement individual is described as one with "a preoccupation with the possibilities for advancement offered by his career."¹⁹⁶ This type of individual would have indicated that he was attracted to his present job because of advancement opportunities it presented or because his previous position restricted such advancement.¹⁹⁷

The Kahn et al. findings indicate that middle managers generally "emerge as the highest group on both these achievement variables."¹⁹⁸ These researchers explain their finding that middle managers experience the greatest degree of role conflict by noting that middle managers "appear particularly driven from within by aspirations for high achievement and by the need for favorable evaluations from others as implied in the status-achievement variable."¹⁹⁹ Furthermore, "the fact that role conflict is experienced at middle management levels somewhat more frequently . . . is likely the result of interaction between . . . job demands and the intense but as yet unsatisfied mobility aspirations of middle management man [sic]."²⁰⁰ In other words, Kahn et al. see the specific behaviors resulting from the middle manager's striving for advancement resulting in the greatest pressure from his or her role set to alter such behavior. Kahn et al. describe such behaviors as follows:

This tendency to ignore some contemporary aspect of a job in the process of concentrating on some other aspect which will better guarantee advancement is a common complaint from the role senders of status-achievement oriented individuals. . . . A repeated complaint is that he fails to keep his subordinates sufficiently informed.²⁰¹

The implications of such role behavior are described in this passage:

But the paths along which individuals pursue status-achievement goals are not without their pitfalls . . . for the status oriented person. . . . the social environment may become a source of pressures to alter his behavior, rather than a territory awaiting his conquest. . . . pressures are likely to be leveled against Middle Management Man's ambition especially as it affects his interpersonal behavior.²⁰²

While the analysis of Kahn et al. does not delineate it as such, the type of role conflict which their study found to be experienced at a high degree by middle managers would be more specifically classified as person-role conflict. The preceding passages illustrate that the source of the role conflict in question is reflexive role expectations. In other words, the individual's self-expectations pursuant to status-achievement goals are in conflict with the expectations of role senders pursuant to current role requirements. This conflict of values or standards internal to the individual with external expectations is person-role conflict.

However, the results of this current study, which focuses specifically on middle managers in student affairs, indicated person-role conflict to be experienced at low frequency. One plausible explanation for this finding may lie in a difference between middle managers in academe and those in private industry who comprised the Kahn et al. study sample. This writer contends that student affairs middle managers are probably more expertise-achievement oriented and as such are not likely to elicit person-role conflict situations to the same degree as their counterparts in industry. On the other hand, this is not to claim that status-achievement goals might not also exist for student affairs middle managers. Rather, the theorized difference discussed above is conceived as one of degree or emphasis. This interpretation of the finding of low person-role conflict for student affairs middle managers is in great part speculative on the part of this writer. Nonetheless, this writer's personal experience

in higher education has been that individuals working in student affairs generally place greater emphasis on expertise-achievement goals than on status-achievement concerns. This contention warrants more substantial investigation.

One alternative explanation for the low incidence of person-role conflict among student affairs middle managers might be that individuals in these positions may have generally made appropriate job choices. In other words, the reason why they do not encounter role expectations which are incongruent with their own internal expectations with greater frequency might be that they have chosen positions with role requirements or expectations largely in accord with their internal role conceptions.

On the other hand, another reason for the low frequency of person-role conflict in this group as compared to their industrial counterparts might be that the inherent nature of student affairs work as also reflected in academic training for the field. This is to say that since the essential concern of student affairs work and training is working with people, the development and application of interpersonal skills may be greater for this group. Therefore, although conditions in the organizational environment such as diverse role senders with likely conflicting expectations might exist, it is plausible that the interpersonal skills of student affairs middle managers assist them in addressing and integrating the external expectations of role senders which are potentially in conflict with their own internal or reflexive role expectations. In other words,

perhaps the interpersonal skills of student affairs middle managers allow them to identify and deal with these particular role expectations before they become role pressures thus resulting in the experience of person-role conflict. Utilizing Wolfe and Snoek's distinction of role conflict categories noted earlier,²⁰³ perhaps student affairs middle managers are generally able to address objective or potential person-role conflict situations by virtue of their interpersonal skills before subjective or experienced person-role conflict occurs.

The remaining category of role conflict examined in this study was intra-sender conflict. The greater expertise-achievement orientation theorized for student affairs middle managers in the foregoing discussion may also serve to explain why this group also experiences intra-sender conflict at low frequency. The essential source of intra-sender conflict has been noted to be expectation-resource discrepancies. In other words, otherwise conflict-free role expectations become contributors to role conflict experiences due to discrepancies of time, individual capability or availability of organizational resources.

However, since "the pursuit of expertise goals implies thriving on challenge and relishing successful performance, both consonant with general organizational goals of effective task accomplishment,"²⁰⁴ the greater expertise-achievement orientation herein theorized for student affairs middle managers may serve to lower the frequency of intra-sender conflicts for this group. This is to say that individuals who value highly successful task performance are likely to compensate for

the expectation resource discrepancies which characterize intra-sender conflict. This might mean pursuing appropriate organizational avenues to facilitate allotment of necessary time and resources not initially at the individual's disposal to accomplish the task at hand. Such compensation might also take the form of completing an assignment in spite of time and resource constraints. Finally, in situations where individual capability appears to be a constraint, a highly expertise-oriented individual would likely seek the requisite assistance to get the job done.

While all of the foregoing interpretations relative to this study's findings of low frequency of person-role conflict and intra-sender conflict are largely speculative on the part of this writer, this is necessary since the review of literature indicated virtually no other studies addressing these topics for student affairs practitioners. Since these interpretations certainly warrant further investigation, this is addressed in the recommendation section.

Role Conflict Differences by Position, Years in Position and Age

Statistics

Examination of the study data for statistically significant differences in the degree of each type of role conflict by position, years in position and age was done through use of the Kruskal-Wallis One-Way Analysis of Variance of Ranks. This nonparametric test is

analogous to a parametric one-way ANOVA in that it compares mean ranks of scores in order to determine if the groups in question can be assumed to come from the same population.²⁰⁵ In other words, this test indicates whether or not significant differences exist among selected groupings of subjects. In this study, the Kruskal-Wallis test indicated that significant differences existed in the data based on position while no significant differences were found based on either years in position or age. It should be noted once again that this secondary research question was intended to be a preliminary exploration while also serving to assess the potential for further research as well as topics for more substantial research designs.

Results

The Kruskal-Wallis One-Way Analysis of Variance of Ranks was used to test for statistically significant differences among the mean ranks of scores for the four role conflict types as well as among the mean ranks of each of the individual questionnaire items comprising each of the four role conflict types.²⁰⁶ The results of these fifty-one tests indicated one statistically significant difference at the .01 level and one at the .05 level. Each of these differences was based on position type. The data pursuant to these findings are presented in table 9 below.

Table 9 indicates that Directors of Student Activities and Directors of Housing differ significantly at the .01 level on

situations involving insufficient time to complete one's work. In other words, these results indicate that Directors of Student Activities and Directors of Housing experience situations involving insufficient time to complete one's work to different degrees. Table 9 also indicates that these two position groupings differ significantly at the .05 level on situations involving working with two or more groups who operate quite differently. These latter

TABLE 9

ROLE CONFLICT DIFFERENCES BY POSITION TYPE:
KRUSKAL-WALLIS ONE-WAY ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE

Position	Mean Rank	Chi-Square	Significance Value
Situations involving insufficient time to complete one's work*			
Activities	47.49	6.78	.009
Housing	34.18		
Situations involving working with two or more groups who operate quite differently**			
Activities	46.63	4.27	.039
Housing	36.02		

NOTE: The ranking of role conflict scores which preceded computation of the Kruskal-Wallis test included the assignment of average ranks in the case of ties.

^{*}The data for these situations were derived from the responses of the eighty subjects who answered questionnaire item 1 (see appendix A).

^{**}The data for these situations were derived from the responses of the eighty-one subjects who answered questionnaire item 9 (see appendix A).

results indicate that these two position groupings experience these latter situations to different degrees as well.

The mean role conflict scores, by position, for each of the two role conflict situations discussed above are presented in table 10.

TABLE 10
MEAN ROLE CONFLICT SCORES OF SELECTED
ROLE CONFLICT SITUATIONS, BY POSITION

Position	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Frequency Descriptor
Situations involving insufficient time to complete one's work [*]			
Activities	4.00	1.71	Moderate
Housing	3.02	1.60	Low
Situations involving working with two or more groups who operate quite differently ^{**}			
Activities	5.32	1.47	High
Housing	4.51	1.75	High

^{*}The data for these situations were derived from the responses of the eighty subjects who answered questionnaire item 1 (see appendix A).

^{**}The data for these situations were derived from the responses of the eighty-one subjects who answered questionnaire item 9 (see appendix A).

The table 10 data indicate that Directors of Student Activities experience situations involving insufficient time to complete one's work at moderate frequency while Directors of Housing experience such situations at low frequency. Table 10 also indicates that both position groupings experience situations involving working with two or more groups who operate quite differently at high frequency. Since the frequency descriptors are based on score ranges, as noted in the instrumentation discussion, the significant difference by position on item 9 situations reflects a difference within the score range defined as "High" for purposes of this study. A closer examination of the mean score of 4.51 for Directors of Housing on these role conflict situations shows it to be only .02 from the moderate range. Thus this score will be more specifically characterized as "Moderately high" in the textual discussion for purposes of distinguishing the frequency level of the two position types which the Kruskal-Wallis test has indicated to be significantly different.

The most plausible interpretation of the finding that situations involving insufficient time to complete one's work are experienced at moderate frequency by Directors of Student Activities as opposed to low frequency for Directors of Housing might be the fact that student activities offices tend much more to serve a catchall function than do housing offices. In other words, this writer's professional experience and observation in each of these realms has found the activities office to be the place where nearly all projects and responsibilities having no easily ascertained direct relevance to any

particular student affairs department are assigned. This includes a seemingly endless stream of ad hoc assignments as well as permanent additions to the Director of Student Activities' workload.

On the other hand, the housing office appears to be viewed as a more discrete, narrowly focused function by chief student affairs officers thereby resulting in far fewer ongoing additions to the basic responsibilities of this office. While this interpretation draws on speculation regarding the views of chief student affairs officers, this writer's experiences certainly support the existence of a tendency on the part of these administrators to expand the responsibilities of the activities office far more than in the case of the housing office. This state of affairs would seem to be one strong reason why the activities group might report more frequent experience of insufficient time to complete work.

While the expansion of basic responsibilities was proposed as an explanation for the finding relative to time problems noted above, a fundamental difference in the basic responsibilities or foci of the activities and housing areas is proposed by this writer as one explanation for the finding relative to working with different groups. As noted, the finding indicates Directors of Activities to experience situations involving working with two or more groups who operate differently at high frequency while Directors of Housing experience such situations slightly less at moderately high frequency. This writer's professional experiences have shown the essence of student activities work to have a group focus. The Director of Student

Activities' role is primarily concerned with various student groups relative to extracurricular programs. These groups include student government, cultural, recreational and social programming boards, committees overseeing the operations of campus publications, media and campus center facilities, fraternities and sororities, international and minority students and student organization officers as a group for leadership training. While this writer's experience in the housing area also indicated substantial group involvement, primarily in the areas of residence staff supervision and residential life programming, this group involvement was not as primary or diverse as compared to the activities office. Such concerns as physical plant management and student discipline generally become more primary issues for the Director of Housing. As a result, both the amount and diversity of involvements with groups in other areas was limited. This scenario serves as one plausible interpretation of the finding that Directors of Activities experience situations and related role conflict involving working with diverse groups slightly more frequently than do Directors of Housing.

The interpretations proposed above relative to each of the findings of significant differences based on position type are based on the empirical knowledge of this writer accumulated during twelve years of work in or association with the student affairs field. This is consistent with the empiric basis noted earlier for selecting the particular position types used in this study. However, this approach was also borne out of necessity due to the paucity of literature or

research results on role conflict in student affairs. The inclusion of this empiric element in the study's design has been duly noted as one of the limitations of this study. This limitation is why these findings relative to position type are presented as preliminary in nature. These findings are also part of the broader goal of providing a basis for more systematic research in the future. The recommendations section of this study utilizes these findings to propose research topics in line with this need for more substantial data on all aspects of role conflict in student affairs.

Interview Data

Qualitative Analysis

The primary purpose of qualitative analysis is to identify themes, patterns or categories of data which provide in-depth description of the phenomenon under study. The essence of qualitative analysis involves describing a particular phenomenon in a holistic manner:

In contrast to experimental designs which manipulate and measure the relationships among a few carefully selected and narrowly defined variables, the holistic approach to research design is open to gathering data on any number of aspects of the setting under study in order to put together a complete picture of the social dynamic of a particular situation.²⁰⁷

However, it is important to recognize that a pure qualitative approach is an ideal framework within which a practical strategy for data analysis is developed:

In conceptualization a pure qualitative research strategy emphasizes a holistic approach where the researcher neither manipulates the setting under study nor predetermines what variables or categories are worth measuring. In practice, however, it is important to recognize that holistic-inductive analysis and naturalistic inquiry are always a matter of degree. . . . Guided by the strategy that mandates the importance of striving to present a holistic picture. . . , the qualitative evaluator recognizes that certain periods during data collection and analysis may focus on component, variable and less-than whole kinds of analysis. 208

Patton commented further on the paradoxical nature of qualitative analysis:

It is the ongoing challenge, paradox, and dilemma of qualitative analysis that we must be constantly moving back and forth between the phenomenon . . . and our abstractions . . . , between descriptions of what has occurred and our analysis of those descriptions, between the complexity of reality and our simplifications of those complexities, between the circularities and interdependencies of human activity and our need for linear, ordered statements. 209

Lofland has described the strength of qualitative analysis as the ability to "provide an orderly description of rich descriptive detail." 210 The qualitative analysis component developed for this study utilizes this strength. This was done via the identification of general themes in the comments of the interview subjects. These themes are intended to be statements which identify and summarize salient points made by subjects in their descriptions of individual

role conflict experiences. They are not meant to be taken as absolutes for purposes of generalization. Rather, these themes and the discussion which accompanies them intend only to provide in-depth description from selected cases so as to supplement the primary quantitative focus of this study.

The focus of the qualitative analysis component of this study involves the identification of significant themes in the data describing the reported experiences of the subjects studied. Since qualitative analysis involves the organization and presentation of data, the primary organizing tool for this effort will be an "analyst constructed typology." This approach requires the researcher to assess the data in the following manner:

To look for patterns, categories and themes for which a typology can be constructed to elucidate variations and contrasts . . . the analyst assumes the task of constructing patterns that appear to exist but remain unconceived in the phenomenology of the participants.²¹¹

"Typologies are classification systems made up of categories that divide some aspect of the world into parts."²¹² They are used primarily to organize and describe data. In keeping with the theoretical backdrop utilized throughout this study, the conceptualization of role conflict types developed by Kahn et al. and Rizzo et al. served as the organizing framework for qualitative data presentation. More specifically, the results of the qualitative analysis will be presented by role conflict type and will include a listing of selected themes identified in the comments of subjects

regarding situations representative of each role conflict type. Illustrative interview content taken from the transcriptions of the recordings will also be presented with the discussion of these themes.

Results

This presentation format, which utilizes the four role conflict types as major categories, was designed to illustrate the nature of qualitative data gathered for this study. The abstraction of themes from the qualitative data involved identifying particularly salient points made by subjects in their descriptions of role conflict experiences. These themes were issues which subjects either emphasized as significant in their own expository comments or which this writer judged to be significant based on nuances in the course of subjects' comments. Such nuances included repetition of topics, visible excitement or enthusiasm, and changes in tone of voice. The particular themes and illustrative interview content presented below were included as representative samples of the perspective provided by the qualitative data.

Person-Role conflict. The following themes were identified in the interview data in the category of person-role conflict:

1. Strategies are needed to deal with unchallenging but necessary tasks
2. Inadequate staffing can overload existing staff
3. A transition period may be necessary when assuming a new position

4. Role requirements can compromise individual standards

The issue of strategies to deal with unchallenging yet necessary tasks was discussed from various perspectives. One subject from the student activities area placed responsibilities for scheduling campus facilities in this category. He characterized it as "something I don't get overly excited with." His strategy is to delegate as much as possible in this particular area:

Obviously, I try to delegate as much as I can to my secretary, who functions as scheduling coordinator. But the College doesn't let secretaries have titles, so she doesn't have that title. So I obviously try to let her do many of those things, the day to day, "You want this room, fine, it's okay." You know, I get involved, obviously, when there are conflicts.

Another housing person's response touched on delegation in addition to the notion of self-discipline:

What I've done is that anything that I find myself uninterested in or bored by, I've come to the conclusion that I'm going to need to farm it out to someone else. It's kind of a monkey-management approach to things where you kick things down to people that you really don't want to do. . . . I find that reading resumes is something that you just can't plow through . . . because you have to be careful you have to read them closely. And I don't find it a great deal of work, but I find that I really have to gear down and do it. So I find it boring, but it's important.

Another issue identified in the realm of person-role conflict concerned inadequacies in the professional student affairs staffing plan. One subject noted both an inadequate number of staff as well as inadequate backgrounds of the existing staff by stating that "I am the housing person. . . . there are no other full-time people. . . . my

staff people don't have the background in student services." She went further to point out why this meant she often had to work on unnecessary things:

By that I mean, because of the way my staffing is set up here, things that normally a Director of Housing would not deal with, I deal with routinely. . . . Everyone is part-time, so, when it comes to representation on any college committee. . . . There are no other housing people to do it. . . . I'm on fifteen committees.

It is relevant to note, however, that this individual has begun to address the dangers inherent in such a situation:

I got to a point where I said, you know, "This is only a job and I can't put everything I have into this job and walk away with stress headaches and all that other stuff." . . . Because I was getting to the point where I was almost bitter about it and that's not fair either. It's not fair to the other people that are affected by that.

While the case described above dealt with the amount of demand placed on an individual, there is also the related consideration of the nature of such demand. Situations may occur in which the individual has to do things that he/she feels should be done differently. The recognition that a transition period is necessary when one assumes a new position was present in the comments of two subjects. One student activities director described difficulty in dealing with established procedures for budgeting, maintenance, student employment and scheduling of facilities. Her perspective is summarized by the following passage:

At times it was like just total frustration. Like where in the hell have these people been for the last decade? My God, I can't believe

professional staff had like such a narrow vision or was reactive. . . . But the flip of that and which is what I wanted to say is that I can remember sitting in some meetings and literally cracking up to myself. . . . So my feelings have ranged from being very indignant about what I inherited. . . and all of those things to sort of laughing, not laugh at in a bad sense, but sort of like again, "If they think this is great, just wait," and that kind of attitude. . . . But I keep thinking . . . development, remember you've got to start with where they are. . . . understanding the environment, the critical nature of the institution and people and where they are.

Another student activities director addressed the necessity for transition into a new position by focusing on expectations held for her in such a situation:

In every single program, I could see things done differently, but you know, the person who did it before, that's the way she had it done and that's the way it had been done for four or five or six years. . . . But there is also an expectation that things should change with a new person and those are things I didn't know until I really felt confident in my job. . . . Up until then, I was just doing things, you know, because that's the way the file says it should be done and that's the way I should be doing it.

Thus, these two cases represent different styles in dealing with the transition period in a new job setting. The former individual assumed a somewhat independent posture for planning changes while the latter took a more reactive stance to organizational expectations of her role. It should be noted, however, that there are situations in which the individual cannot impose the changes he/she desires.

The specific requirements of an individual's work role may result in compromise of one's personal standards. One student

activities director commented on her situation in which she was primarily expected to simply carry out existing policy:

The rules and regulations for like mixers and keg parties and movies and socials were all layed down before I even came here. . . . I think we have to be a little more flexible in student activities than what's happening here.

Although this subject did not agree wholeheartedly with what she felt was an inflexible approach, her view was that "I know what my responsibility is and I'll go with that rather than putting up a big to do about it." She also described her efforts to be consistent within this overall framework as a means of dealing with the compromise that was necessary:

Even though students say that they can't believe I'm enforcing this, they know that I'm consistent, they know I'm fair and that has helped and that makes me feel better about what I'm doing. Sometimes they realize that what I'm enforcing I don't believe in, yet they can understand that that's part of my position. . . . They don't make it any tougher on me. . . . They understand that it's more of an administration thing and I'm doing my job. Whether I believe it or not, I really have to do it.

From a different perspective, the comments of a housing person noted how bureaucratic procedures worked to restrict what he considered to be an efficient level of performance. In the area of purchasing, he noted that "we have to work closely with the building authority in the state and a lot of times it would be easier to go out and get the items you want directly from the company." His comments relative to personnel procedures provide further evidence to support

his view that bureaucratic requirements limit individual performance.

His view is summarized by the following passage:

State personnel procedures are pretty tight. . . . where you have to advertise positions. . . . And it's hard if somebody is out of a slot, it's hard to get the emergency fill for that slot without having to go through all of this rigormoroll of advertising the position or what have you. . . . We have to go through all these hoops to get things done. . . . we have to play by the rules.

While the previous subject emphasized her own consistency as a means to deal with required compromises, the individual quoted above emphasized accountability. In other words, if he must play by these rules, he expects all related parties to do their jobs in accordance with these rules. He elaborated on his view concerning personnel procedures as follows:

It's extremely more complicated than people think. So when it is screwed up, I get really upset at the people that are screwing it up. . . . I would like for the people to hold it in the air and say, "I screwed up this part." I may not like it but at least I respect them for owning their part of the process. If you can at least understand, it's like an MIA. If you can find the body, you feel that at least you know what happened to it. . . . So my idea is to try and find out what happened and nail the source and make sure it doesn't happen again.

Intra-Sender conflict. The following themes were identified in the interview data in the category of intra-sender conflict:

1. Immediate concerns can deter long-range planning
2. Inadequate long-range planning can result in uncoordinated administration and crisis management
3. The lack of established policy and procedure can result in arbitrary and inconsistent decision-making

4. Inadequate understanding of issues by superiors can result in unrealistic role expectations
5. The student activities office may serve a catchall function for the student affairs division

One subject discussed the necessity of having to deal with a constant flow of immediate concerns as a deterrent which limited the time he could devote to long-range planning:

We are dealing with things from the past and trying to bandaid or cure issues or problems or concerns so that they can move forward and grow and be the state-of-the-art that I believe student activities can be. I also find myself overwhelmed with a lot of problems in the personnel area. . . . This remediation is constantly a concern of mine with students and the staff.

The discussion of situations in which an individual works under incompatible policies and guidelines revealed a variety of perspectives related to policy development and program planning. The following comments of a housing person speak to the implications of inadequate long-range planning:

The institution has not established long-range goals and strategies. So each area kind of runs its own way and biggest is the game of who's got the political power. . . . If we had a long-range plan, it's simple. You can give everybody in the organization an equal number of cards that they play, they know that there are fifty-two cards in the deck. But without a plan, everyone is off playing different games. It's hard to be playing a game when you don't know if its checkers or parchese that you are working with.

This confusing uncoordinated mode of operation is not the only significant outcome of inadequate long-range planning. An additional

outcome is the renewal of a cycle of short-range crisis management.

The housing director quoted above commented further:

If the university would say, "This is where we are going to be ten years from now," I could say "Given this university plan, this is what we have to do." That means that this facility is not going to be fixed because we're going to turn this building over into a lab. They want to play it to get everything fixed but then they're going to say, "Well, do you really need this money?"...we wait for a crisis to occur and then we get it fixed. But in the meantime . . . I have people screaming that our facilities are not in good shape.

An issue closely related to inadequate long-range planning is the lack of established policy and procedures. The resultant arbitrary and inconsistent decision-making was described by two subjects facing it in their own institutions. One student activities director characterized his situation as one of "no one wanting to draw any definitions of what parameters you can function in." Although he professed to understand the roots of the problem, his frustration in dealing with it remained very evident:

At times I feel like I'm the lone-ranger out there. . . . but someone has to do it. . . . And I don't think that it's totally the fault of the people who are in charge as administrators of the campus. I think this campus is an example of a number in the country that grew so quickly that it couldn't keep up with itself and now it's trying to catch up.

While he perceived some administrators willing to make decisions establishing permanent policies, there seemed to be many more who would not:

There are those that do, there are others that refuse. They'll make decisions permanently but they will not go on-line. They won't let

you know they're making decisions. They won't include you in any decisions when you should be a part of it and then they deny that they've made any decisions. It's just in incredible management form that drives me up the wall because my style is very straightforward, above board and pretty wide open.

A second subject, also in student activities, expressed her views while discussing the lack of concrete policies in her institutional setting. She summarized her situation as one in which "there are a lot of things that don't have a policy, we don't have anything in writing." Her basic view in reaction to this is that policy needs to be concrete, clear and written:

Coming from a very strict background, the first thing I learned was policy-making, and that was my concentration: administration, planning and social policy. Here, there is not one single policy or one single guideline to go by on anything. . . . For example, the academic advising system: If you want to get an advisor, fine; If you don't, fine. That doesn't make any sense, either you do or you don't. . . . It is the lack of policy and the subjectivity in decision-making that really bothers me.

While the foregoing discussion has addressed how inadequate policy planning and implementation can cause the individual difficulties in meeting role expectations, there are also those situations in which individual capabilities simply are not congruent with certain assignments or aspects of one's role. One subject pointed this issue out relative to his responsibility for overseeing residence hall security. He expressed his difficulties by commenting that "I have no police training, no police knowledge, I know nothing about urban areas, urban life." Some of the problems he faced are noted below:

This is a very busy street we are on. . . . We get a lot of people out here at night visiting their friends who did come here. I want to stem that flow. . . . If I'm called out here . . . and find something is totally out of control . . . there is nothing I can do. . . . I think it will be going on long after I leave. It's a human behavior problem which I don't see as changing because we're not changing the markets we recruit in and I don't see any social force that is going to change the behavior. . . . This college has the second lowest family income in the state. . . . I mean, talking about low income and being involved in the type of things that security has had to deal with, it's been my experience that the two things go very much hand-in-hand. . . . There have been very serious issues, very violent physical fights, people leaving the campus in ambulances, people with disfiguring injuries. . . . So it's a very sensitive issue here. A lot was attempted, a lot of solutions were attempted long before I got here.

From this subject's perspective, his superiors lack understanding of the true source of the problems he faces. They expect him to maintain residence hall security but continue to recruit a residence population in which security problems will continue to occur regardless of his efforts. Therefore, he sees the role expectations held for him in this realm as unrealistic. The issue becomes even more difficult when considering his lack of training relative to security functions in general.

Another subject addressed the issue of unrealistic role expectations by discussing a tendency for the student activities area to become a catchall within the student affairs division. His immediate supervisor, the Dean of Students, seemed to have expectations that this subject would routinely accept and complete ad hoc

assignments ad infinitum. It appeared to him that projects which had no logical connection to any specific student affairs area seemed to find their way to his desk:

I sometimes feel that sometimes my office . . . becomes a dumping-ground and so therefore it's just kind of like, "Here's a project, here's a real quickey and I'll send it to you on a half piece of paper and I'd like you to take care of it." And I have no knowledge of where I go to do it or how I research it, so it takes me X amount of time just to figure out what I'm going to have to do to get the problem resolved or in order to handle the situation. . . . some of which are related to student activities and some of which are not. All of which I suppose you can say are related to student affairs and I am part of the student affairs staff. . . . but there is a limit and she's always hitting me up.

It is useful to note that this individual has taken positive measures to resolve his dilemma:

Sometimes I don't mind if I feel that I have enough time and I can budget them into my time. Other times I feel a little frustrated and I have shared some of those frustrations. I think I'm getting a little more brazen and now I'm saying, "I can't take it anymore, I need help," which is why I've got an assistant director that we'll be hiring. That person will free me up to do some of the other things I want to do.

Inter-Role conflict. The following themes were identified in the interview data in the category of inter-role conflict:

1. Diverse role expectations exist among administrators, students and faculty
2. Role requirements differ according to the needs of different student groups

The basic form of inter-role conflict consists of situations in which the individual is unable to act the same when working with two or more different groups. Several different examples were presented by subjects discussing this issue of diverse role expectations.

One housing director focused on the difference between administrative expectations for control and student expectations for freedom:

They want to feel like they have control over the students. . . . So, I have to use language and play up to them in a way that says to them, "Yes, we are in control of the situation," and assure them that everything is all right. Whereas with the students, if I start talking in terms of control and showing them that everything is calm and peaceful, they feel like they've been treated like children. They don't want a calm, peaceful atmosphere all of the time. It's supposed to be a lot of good times socially.

Consideration of this sort of situation leads logically to a discussion of how differing role expectations can be addressed by the individual faced with them.

A student activities worker provided one response to the question of resolving the differing role expectations of administrative superiors and students. This subject's analysis of the issue focused on the problem of students expecting personal behavior while administrative superiors expect professional behavior from an individual. She described her situation in this way:

It's two different groups. When I'm working with a group of students . . . planning an activity, they invite me to the activity as

. . . the person. . . . They expect me to drink and have a good time. . . .
 administration expects me to present myself as a professional, to oversee and to supervise. . . .
 It's very difficult when most of them are just three, four or five years younger than I am. The student in me keeps wanting to come out.

This subject commented further as to how she responds to this problem:

I like to have a good time and I think that they may look at that as not being professional. . . .
 I've gotten that a lot, "You're not one of them, you've got to do this or that." I've gotten that from my superiors. . . . I get angry that I can't be who I am and put this professionalism aside. I think that who I am is professional and I think that administration doesn't always see that. . . . I don't play "Now that I'm with students I'm going to do this and now that I'm with administration I'm going to do this," I don't do that. I think that I tend to be myself with both sets of people. . . . And yet, I realize there's a professional side of me. I am always toying with that. When can I let down the professional side and just be . . . the person? I have a real hard time with that.

In the final analysis, this subject has adopted the following posture:

For the most part, I go against what the administration is saying. . . . I say that I am who I am. . . . I like to have a good time with them. I don't think I'm disrespectful. I don't think I'm not professional. I usually tell the administration that's how I feel. . . . I think that they don't want me to ruin their reputation and I think that I help their reputation. Maybe they don't realize that, but I think the fact that I'm a lot more flexible than some of the administrators up here is to their advantage.

Another theme concerned with the expectations of diverse groups focuses specifically on involvement with varied student groups. One housing director noted the different roles he played with commuters as opposed to resident students. Due to the tremendous demand for

residence space on his campus, commuting students view him as the administrator who controls access to residence living: "I'm the guy that says yes or no to them." On the other hand, his role with resident students is to "promote a positive community atmosphere." A Director of Student Activities responsible for advising several student organizations commented that "my role of advisor changes according to their level of competence."

Another student activities worker, involved with minority students, offered some insight into her situation:

People seem to think that all minorities have the same expectations but it's not true. Especially when you are dealing with someone who is from a particular group and her job's to deal with all the minority groups. . . . The Hispanics expect me to be at their level, speak Spanish with them . . . and go to their meetings and know what's going on with them. . . . The Black students see me as Hispanic also. But they see me as the administrator who needs to be there for them. . . . What happens is that, for example, anything I do, . . . they keep track of my budget. If I give one more penny to a Hispanic group for Latin Week or something, they say "See, you are giving more to them than you are giving us."

This subject summarized the perspective she has developed in reaction to the situation she faces. She commented as follows:

So what I'm trying to say is that each one of them, both groups, have different expectations and they don't work together. The Hispanics do their own thing, the Blacks their own thing. Therefore, my position is even worse because I have to be torn. . . . The minorities role here sometimes gets to be difficult.

In concluding the discussion of role conflict related to multiple group involvement, it is relevant to note comments made concerning faculty and administrator views of the roles of student affairs middle managers. These comments were offered as generalizations in contrast to the more specific examples presented in discussion of previous themes. Nonetheless, these two groups represent major segments of the campus and warrant consideration at any level. The subjects commenting on this topic felt that faculty held very low level expectations for student affairs middle managers. One housing director summarized the faculty perspective as follows:

"What can someone from housing contribute to the academic planning of this institution? What can someone from student affairs contribute to them being better faculty members? You know, you're just there to do a service. So I know that, so that's the way I've got to play the game. As long as I'm successful in manipulating what I want, it doesn't bother me because I don't need that approval.

He also commented as to how he deals with this situation:

First of all, . . . I have to go out and rent cloth shirts, walk in, beat my breasts and say, "Oh great and noble faculty." You really have to play a low key approach with faculty. They know it all. I'll give you a good example. I was just on a committee where the faculty went around and around and around. But another staff member and I, we manipulated the committee. We wrote the report and the faculty is submitting it to the faculty senate. But if I said here's a report from . . . , never would have gone anyplace.

A subject from the student activities area commented on faculty expectations as follows: "When an area goes bananas, the Faculty Senate is the first to accentuate that as to letting us know what is

wrong. They never tell us what is right, but that's typical." He believed that faculty only expected that he "throw out something into the sandbox, make sure that the pom poms are made, be a mother, be a father." Finally, he described from a philosophical perspective how he deals with such expectations:

You do a lot of risk-taking and you're working with young people who are really enthusiastic or committed, are intelligent, and you have this commitment to help with personal development and growth. At the same time, when you make that commitment, you run risks. And when you run risks, you can at times run into conflict with the expectations of other forces that are looking at you from their perceptions of what they feel you should be doing.

Whereas faculty were generally characterized as having low expectations for student affairs middle managers, administrators were described as having inappropriate expectations. In other words, administrators were seen as ignorant as to the nature of the student affairs functional areas in question. This is exemplified in the comments of one student activities worker:

Some of the administrative people on this campus, . . . I think they must believe that I sit over here with all the students around me all the time and can tell them everything that they have to do. And that I can have complete control and be responsible for for all their actions. . . . What do they think? I hold these grand meetings every day?

Although the frustration is quite apparent in these comments, this subject has a generally positive perspective. She notes that "a lot of administrative people may not understand the day to day activity

over here and so in many respects . . . I need to do some educating and have tried to do that."

Inter-Sender conflict. The following themes were identified in the interview data in the category of inter-sender conflict:

1. Politics are a reality which need to be considered in organizational life
2. Differences in administrative style of role senders can result in conflict
3. Inadequate communication can result in conflicting role expectations

The reality of organizational politics was one topic noted by some subjects who discussed role conflict resulting from situations in which incompatible requests are received from two or more people. Although opposition in principle was expressed relative to the political dimension of organizational life, these views were balanced by an acceptance of politics as a reality to be considered. One housing person described a situation in which she was unable to meet both the expectations of her supervisor and those of his superiors. In this instance, she was assigned to perform certain tasks by upper-level administrators while not being allowed to keep her immediate supervisor informed of these activities. She outlined this situation as follows:

I was being asked to meet with one group in confidentiality and not let my boss in. Ethically, that was a problem and I got to the point where I felt I could not do that. He is my superior even though his superior didn't want to involve him. So it's really . . . it's

all just very political. You know? . . . I find myself very often trying to walk a fine line and not get involved.

Another subject discussed politics as experienced in a public institution. In this instance, the conflict is between expectations that policies will be implemented consistently and expectations that exceptions can be made. The housing officer in question related the example below. The term "Speaker of the House" was substituted for the actual political figure involved:

A cute one is we're supposed to be fair, above-board, don't make any deals with anyone involving procedures. That's easy. We love to do it that way. We do it by the rule book. Then the Chancellor calls me up and says the Speaker of the House has this nephew who wants a private room. . . . Then what happens? Nephew comes to school, a freshman . . . he talked to twenty other kids. . . . students marched on my building saying that I'm accepting kick-backs. . . . Being in the situation long enough, I know those things can happen and I got ways of dealing with those, but that's the conflicting expectations. . . . I think that anybody in a public role has got those same kinds of problems.

Other problems faced by the organization member have to do with the view that the tone and style set at the top of the organizational ladder impact on the individual's functioning at lower levels. One housing person commented as to how a change in institutional leadership can create role conflict for individuals at other levels in the organization. She noted that adjustments were needed since turnover resulted in a mix of operating styles, approaches, and expectations of staff:

We had a changeover in administration so we had people who were here before and very often their styles are very different and their expectations are very different. . . . We had a new Vice-President, we had a new Dean of Students and there were some other shifts. . . . It was really very much mixed signals.

Another subject described a classic case of incompatible role expectations in that he was required to report to two supervisors for different aspects of his job. Working in housing, he reports to a Vice-President of Administration concerning food service while at the same time reporting to a Dean of Student Affairs concerning residential life. Since the two areas are not unrelated, the problem of incompatible expectations arises. One such situation focused on dissatisfaction with the food service vendor:

The college isn't entirely satisfied. The Dean of Students says to protect the vendor at all costs because basically they're doing a good job and just need to clean up a few little odds and ends. The Vice-President is saying, "I think that we ought to get to the point of telling them that we want to go out to bid and start over again." . . . So, their expectations: One is essentially to preserve the vendor, . . . change the job they're doing. And the V.P. is saying, "Let's consider changing the person in the job."

In addition to the contrasting task and person orientations apparent from this example, there is also the consideration of general operating style. The Dean's view was described as one of "as long as things go, let's not worry about it." The Vice-President, on the other hand, "doesn't like papers to sit on his desk, he likes to turn it over, he wants to keep it moving." The problems created for this

mutual subordinate were summarized by the subject in this way: "I have to work at two speeds all the time. You're dealing with two different people and the styles . . . are very different." It is implicit that flexibility is necessary in order for the individual to shift back and forth between the speeds appropriate for each of his supervisors. However, there must also be accommodations between an individual's style and that of any one supervisor if their relationship is to be a productive one.

It seems fairly obvious that conflict can occur where basic differences in administrative style exist. This point was brought out in discussion of situations in which an individual does things that are apt to be accepted by one person and not by others. One activities person described her problem in dealing with a supervisor who often presents her proposals to his supervisor and then reverses his initial approval of them. Since she is a very independent action-oriented person, she has difficulty when her supervisor moves slowly and changes decisions based on the reaction of others. Her description was as follows:

I have a very slow supervisor. His style is very different from mine and he is very laid-back. And you know, he only takes things one at a time. Everything I take to him gets approved. . . . Then he consults with the Dean. . . . Then he comes back to me and says the Dean didn't like it. . . . We reached the conclusion that it is a matter of style. He's picked up a little in terms of keeping up with me . . . and I slowed down a little bit. . . . it's like we both have to give a little bit. . . . Still, you know, I wish I could wind him up.

While the difficulty in dealing with such mixed signals is apparent, difficulty is also caused when signals are not communicated.

The issue of inadequate communication resulting in incompatible role expectations was addressed by a housing person. The example used centered on a dispute over job responsibilities:

The President very honestly thought it my position to fill the building. I personally felt it was not my position to fill a building unless I was going to be a revenue producing office and unless my job responsibilities were going to be changed. . . . And the Dean of Students understood my position and supported that. The Director of Conferences understood my position and the Vice-President really didn't know what the expectation was. . . . Job descriptions are not clear. Everybody assumes more and more responsibility. And depending on who is the person most available at the time, people and job areas cross back and forth. . . . It really isn't clearly defined. You know, like you need clarification. . . . I want to know what my responsibility is.

Finally, it is relevant to note the outcome of experiencing such a situation. This subject reflected on the experience as follows:

I think that I did become very stressed out. . . . I think that I really began to look at other options to find jobs and I really didn't know what I wanted to do, just really to clarify some of my own values. . . . This is what was really important to me in separating my self-worth from this job.

Summary

The qualitative data presented in this section serve as examples of the themes identified in the comments of the interview subjects.

These themes and the illustrative interview data which accompanies them are not meant to be taken as absolutes for generalization. Rather, they are correctly seen as descriptive summary statements relative to the role conflict experiences of a selected group of subjects. These themes touched upon such issues as the situations which can result from differences between organizational expectations of the individual and the individual's self-expectations; the importance of planning and policy development; the implications of inadequate communication and differing administrative styles; the need to develop strategies to deal with diverse role expectations; and the impact of political considerations on organization life.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, FUTURE RESEARCH, CONCLUSIONS

Summary

The purpose of this study was to address the lack of data on the role conflict experiences of student affairs middle managers. The primary research question investigated differences in degree of experienced role conflict among the four role conflict types used in the study: Person-Role conflict, Intra-Sender conflict, Inter-Role conflict and Inter-Sender conflict. A secondary research question investigated differences in the degree to which each type of role conflict was experienced by position type, years in current position and age. Supplemental interview data were gathered from selected subjects to provide descriptive information on individual role conflict experiences.

The quantitative data were gathered via a questionnaire mailing while the interviews were conducted via a qualitative interview guide. Non-parametric statistical procedures were used to analyze the data relative to the two quantitative research questions while qualitative analysis was used to identify general themes in the interview data. The results of data analysis indicated student affairs middle managers do experience statistically significant different degrees of the various types of role conflict. These results also indicated

statistically significant differentiation by position type for two role conflict situations.

Various elements of the landmark study of Kahn et al. were utilized in this study as theoretical grounding or points of departure to assist in interpreting the findings of this current study. The research of Kahn et al. indicated that "role conflict increases as one goes up the organization ladder, reaches its apogee at middle management levels, and falls again at the top management level."²¹³ A review of the interpretation offered by Kahn et al. pursuant to this finding showed that it would be more precise to state that middle managers experience person-role conflict to a greater degree than do other managerial personnel.

Nonetheless, since this present study does not include role conflict data for other levels of student affairs workers, it cannot be determined within this framework if the frequency of person-role conflict or any other type is greater for student affairs middle managers as compared to other levels of student affairs staff. It is important to note, however, that the finding of Kahn et al. indicated that role conflict was relatively higher for middle managers as well as being high in absolute terms per the measurement scheme used in that study. Even if it were to be found that person-role conflict or any of the other types were experienced at relatively higher levels by student affairs middle managers, it does not appear high enough in absolute terms per the measurement scheme utilized in this study to warrant consideration as a major issue for student affairs middle

managers. However, additional research is called for on several aspects of this issue.

Future Research

Introduction

Several questions were raised by the discussion of the results of the data analysis conducted in this study. These questions suggest several avenues along which future research pursuant to role conflict in student affairs could be pursued. Some of these are recommended in the discussion below.

Recommendations

Since the review of literature for this study identified only a single study dealing with role conflict in student affairs, it is recommended that additional research be conducted utilizing the types of role conflict presented in this study in order to examine differences in degree of role conflict experienced in student affairs. Such data will provide a more precise and accurate understanding of the role conflict phenomenon in student affairs. Similar benefits will also result from future research which examines differences in degree of role conflict in student affairs due to position types and demographic variables different from those used in this study. For

example, other student affairs middle managers could be studied (e.g. Directors of Admissions, Counseling, Financial Aid, Placement) as could other demographic variables (e.g. institutional size, level and nature of educational background, sex, organizational level).

Research which would examine the degree of role conflict experienced by student affairs workers at various organization levels would address one question raised in discussion of the findings of this study. More specifically, how does the relative degree of role conflict experienced by student affairs middle managers compare to the findings of Kahn et al. concerning role conflict for middle managers in the business world? As previously noted, the Kahn et al. findings indicated role conflict to be greatest for middle managers. If the degree of role conflict reaches its peak at an organizational level other than middle management in the student affairs realm, it is that level where researchers, trainers and organization developers should focus their efforts.

Additionally, since the study of Kahn et al. was used as a major reference point in this study, it would be useful for another study to replicate this study's investigation of degree of role conflict among student affairs middle managers while examining for differences on the basis of sex. Since the Kahn et al. sample consisted only of males, this perspective may provide fresh insight when comparing the present study findings with those of Kahn et al.

The two findings of significant differences by position type in this current study also suggest future research possibilities. One of

these findings noted that Directors of Student Activities experience insufficient time to complete their work at a greater frequency than Directors of Housing. The views of chief student affairs officers regarding each of these student affairs departments were noted as one possible explanation for this finding. Research which specifically examines these views would shed light on the validity of this interpretation. The other finding noted above indicated that Directors of Student Activities experienced a slightly greater degree of role conflict due to greater involvement with diverse groups. This contention could be substantiated by research dealing with the job structure and activities of each position.

Other findings pursuant to the primary research question posed in this current study also suggest future research topics. The discussion of why person-role conflict was indicated at low frequency proposed both job satisfaction and educational background as possible explanations. As a result, research on the job satisfaction of student affairs middle managers which addresses congruence of role expectations with the individual's self-expectations would be useful. Efforts to study the impact of educational preparation regarding abilities to avoid role conflict situations would also be appropriate. Finally, it is recommended that future research be conducted which examines the achievement motivation of student affairs workers generally and middle managers specifically. The findings from such research would provide information useful in evaluating the theorized interpretations presented in this current study concerning the low

degree of both person-role conflict and intra-sender conflict. In other words, it would then be possible to examine the relative magnitude of status-achievement orientation and expertise-achievement orientation for student affairs middle managers. It would also be possible to compare these data for student affairs middle managers with the same information currently available for their counterparts in the business sector.

In summary, the following recommendations for future research are offered:

1. Additional research examining differences in degree of role conflict experienced in student affairs among the four role conflict types
2. Research which examines differences in degree of the four role conflict types in student affairs by demographic variables other than those used in this study: Studies of differences by sex and organization level would be especially useful
3. Investigation of the views of chief student affairs officers concerning the role of student activities and housing in the student affairs division
4. Comparative examination of the job structure and activities of Directors of Housing and Directors of Student Activities
5. Research on the job satisfaction of student affairs middle managers focusing on congruence of role expectations and self-expectations

6. Research which assesses the impact of educational background on the student affairs worker's role behavior as it relates to degree of experienced person-role conflict
7. Studies of achievement motivation of student affairs workers, particularly of student affairs middle managers

It is hoped data resulting from all of the research recommended above will help in establishing a greater understanding of the various aspects of the issue of role conflict in student affairs.

Conclusions

Based on the foregoing analysis of data and interpretation of the findings therein, the following conclusions are offered:

1. The degree to which student affairs middle managers experience role conflict does not appear to justify its consideration as a major issue for this group
2. Student affairs middle managers experience different types of role conflict to different degrees as follows: Person-Role conflict (Low); Intra-Sender conflict (Low); Inter-Role conflict (Moderate); Inter-Sender conflict (Moderate)
3. Preliminary analysis for differences in degree of role conflict experienced due to position, years in position and age indicated significant differences by position for role conflict situations involving time pressures as well as those involving working with diverse groups

Generally speaking, the degree of role conflict measured in this study was not as high as might have been expected on the basis of both the review of relevant literature and this writer's experiences and observations in the student affairs field. The only other available study to date which investigated role conflict in student affairs echoes this position:

There was evidence to believe that these role-stress relationships were severe among student personnel professionals, a population which had not been studied in respect to these variables. The results of this study have shown that this believe is false in terms of practical significance. . . . no severe role stress problems exist for these professionals.²¹⁴

This writer would temper the certainty of the conclusion in the above passage with the understanding that more research is needed.

FOOTNOTES

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¹⁸John R. P. French, Jr. and Robert L. Kahn, "Mental Health in Industry," Journal of Social Issues, 1962, 28, 3.

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²⁰Katz and Kahn, p. 198.

²¹Monnett, p. 11.

²²Ibid., pp. 48-49.

²³Ibid., pp. 11-12.

²⁴J. Diedrick Snoek, "Role Strain in Diversified Role Sets," The American Journal of Sociology, 1966, 71, 371.

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²⁶Robert H. Miles and William D. Perrault Jr., "Organizational Role Conflict: Its Antecedents and Consequences," Organizational Behavior and Human Performance, 1976, 17, 39.

²⁷Ibid., p. 39.

²⁸Robert H. Miles, "Role Requirements as Sources of Organizational Stress," Journal of Applied Psychology, 1976, 61, 172.

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³²Miles and Perrault, p. 23.

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⁴²Ibid., p. 8

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APPENDIX A

Quantitative Questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRESection I

- a) Please indicate your official position title: _____
- b) Are you the individual in charge of your department(i.e. Student Activities or Housing)? YES _____ *NO _____ *If no, please indicate the official position title of the individual who is in charge of your department: _____
- c) Do you have administrative responsibility for supervising any student affairs department(s) other than just Student Activities or just Housing? *YES _____ NO _____ *If yes, please indicate the other departments which you supervise: _____
- d) Do you report directly to a chief student affairs officer(i.e. Vice-President for Student Affairs, Dean of Students, Director of Student Services, etc.) or his/her designee(e.g. Assistant to Vice-President, Assistant or Associate Dean, etc.)? YES _____ NO _____ *Whether your response was yes or no, please indicate the official position title of the individual you report directly to: _____
- e) How long have you held your current position?
- Less than one year _____
- One to three years _____
- Four to six years _____
- Seven or more years _____
- f) Please indicate your age per the following ranges:
- Less than 22 years old _____
- 22 to 25 years old _____
- 26 to 30 years old _____
- Over 30 years old _____

PLEASE CONTINUE TO SECTION II ON THE ATTACHED PAGE!!

Section II

Instructions: Please use the scale to the right of each statement to indicate the degree to which the condition described by each statement exists for you in your current position. Please respond by placing a check in the one appropriate column to the right of each statement:

Never	= N
Almost Never	= AN
Seldom	= S
Occasionally	= OCC
Often	= OFT
Almost Always	= AA
Always	= A

- | | N | AN | S | OCC | OFT | AA | A |
|--|---|----|---|-----|-----|----|---|
| 1. I have enough time to complete my work. | | | | | | | |
| 2. I perform tasks that are too easy or boring. | | | | | | | |
| 3. I have to do things that should be done differently. | | | | | | | |
| 4. I am able to act the same regardless of the group I am with. | | | | | | | |
| 5. I work under incompatible policies and guidelines. | | | | | | | |
| 6. I receive an assignment without adequate resources and materials to execute it. | | | | | | | |
| 7. I have to buck a rule or policy in order to carry out an assignment. | | | | | | | |
| 8. I receive assignments that are within my training and capability. | | | | | | | |
| 9. I work with two or more groups who operate quite differently. | | | | | | | |

10. I receive incompatible requests
from two or more people.
11. I do things that are apt to be
accepted by one person and not
accepted by others.
12. I work on unnecessary things.
13. I perform work that suits my
values.

N	AN	S	OCC	OFT	AA	A
---	----	---	-----	-----	----	---

*PLEASE CONTINUE TO FINAL PAGE OF THIS QUESTIONNAIRE!!

*Please indicate below whether or not you would be willing to participate as a subject for the final part of this study. A two-hour tape-recorded interview to discuss your responses to this survey would be the only time commitment required of you should you answer "YES". (The confidentiality of all subjects will be respected throughout the study.) If you are undecided and would like more information before making a decision as to further participation in this study, please indicate this by placing a check in the space provided below.

*I WOULD BE WILLING TO BE INTERVIEWED FOR THE FINAL PART OF THIS STUDY: YES ____ NO ____

*I am undecided and would like you to contact me to discuss my further participation ____

APPENDIX B

Qualitative Interview Guide

Interview Guide

Person-Role Conflict

- (2) You indicated on the screening survey that you(frequency descriptor e.g. "often") perform tasks that are too easy or boring.

*What tasks specifically are you expected to perform that are too easy or boring? Why do you see these as too easy or boring?

_____ What frequency does(frequency descriptor) represent?

_____ When such situations occur, do they occur at certain regular times in the year?

_____ Who has these expectations of you concerning each of these tasks?

_____ How is each of them communicated to you?

_____ How often is each of them communicated to you?

_____ Are any of these expectations related to certain specific events and/or larger issues?

*How do you feel when faced with each of these situations?

*How do you respond to each of these expectations when they are communicated to you?

_____ do these responses handle the situation for you each time?

_____ how do you feel after responding in each case?

*What is your opinion regarding being expected to do these things?

_____ how would you change this situation?

- (3) You indicated on the screening survey that you _____ have to do things that should be done differently.

*Which things specifically do you have to do that should be done differently? Why should these things be done differently?

_____ What frequency does _____ represent?

_____ When such situations occur, do they occur at certain regular times in the year?

_____ Who has expectations of you concerning how you should do each of these things?

_____ How is each of them communicated to you?

_____ How often is each of them communicated to you?

_____ Are any of these expectations related to certain specific events and/or larger issues?

*How do you feel when faced with each of these responsibilities?

*How do you respond to each of these expectations when they are communicated to you?

_____ do these responses handle the situation for you each time?

_____ how do you feel after responding in each case?

*How should these responsibilities be carried out in each case?

(12) You indicated on the screening survey that you _____ work on unnecessary things.

*Which specific parts of your job are unnecessary yet still expected of you? Why do you see these as unnecessary?

_____ What frequency does _____ represent?

_____ When such situations occur, do they occur at certain regular times in the year?

_____ Who has these expectations of you concerning each of these parts of your job?

_____ How is each of them communicated to you?

_____ How often is each of them communicated to you?

_____ Are any of these expectations related to certain specific events and/or larger issues?

*How do you feel when faced with each of these parts of your job?

*How do you respond to each of these expectations when they are communicated to you?

_____ do these responses handle the situation for you each time?

_____ how do you feel after responding to each case?

*How has being expected to work on unnecessary things affected your perspective on your job?

(13) You indicated on the screening survey that you _____ perform work that suits your values.

*What specifically are you expected to do in your job that does not suit your values?

Why do you see these things as not suited to your values?

_____ What frequency does _____ represent?

_____ When such situations occur, do they occur at certain regular times in the year?

_____ Who has these expectations of you concerning each of these aspects of your job?

_____ How is each of them communicated to you?

_____ How often is each of them communicated to you?

_____ Are any of these expectations related to certain specific events and/or larger issues?

*How do you feel when faced with each of these aspects of your job?

*How do you respond to these expectations when they are communicated to you?

_____ do these responses handle the situation for each time?

_____ how do you feel after responding in each case?

*What is your view on working in a situation where parts of your job do not suit your values?

Intra-Sender Conflict

(1) You indicated on the screening survey that you _____ have enough time to complete your work.

*Which expectations for completion of your work do you have difficulty meeting in the time allotted for them?

Why do you believe this situation exists?

_____ What frequency does _____ represented?

_____ When such situations occur, do they occur at certain regular times in the year?

_____ Who has each of these expectations of you concerning completion of your work within specified time limits?

_____ How is each of them communicated to you?

_____ How often is each of them communicated to you?

_____ Are any of these expectations related to certain specific events and/or larger issues?

*How do you feel when faced with each of these situations?

*How do you respond to each of these expectations when they are communicated to you?

_____ do these responses handle the situation for you each time?

_____ how do you feel after responding in each case?

*What do you think of this situation in general?

_____ what suggestions for improving it can you make?

(5) You indicated on the screening survey that you _____ work under incompatible policies and guidelines.

*Which organizational policies place conflicting expectations on you? How so? What do you believe causes this situation to exist?

_____ What frequency does _____ represent?

_____ When such situations occur, do they occur at certain regular times in the year?

_____ How are the expectations in each of these policies communicated to you?

_____ How often is each of them communicated to you?

_____ Are any of these expectations related to certain specific events and/or larger issues?

*How do you feel when faced with each of these situations?

*How do you respond to each of these situations?

_____ do these responses handle the situation for you each time?

_____ how do you feel after responding in each case?

*Do you believe this issue can be cleared up?

_____ How might this be accomplished?

(6) You indicated on the screening survey that you _____
receive an assignment without adequate resources and materials
to execute it.

*What assignments have you been expected to complete without
adequate resources and materials?

Why do you believe adequate resources and materials were not
available to you?

_____ What frequency does _____ represent?

_____ When such situations occur, do they occur at certain regular
times in the year?

_____ Who has had these expectations of you concerning each of these
assignments?

_____ How was each of them communicated to you?

_____ How often was each of them communicated to you?

_____ Were any of these expectations related to certain specific events
and/or larger issues?

*How did you feel when faced with each of these assignments?

*How did you respond to each of these expectations when they were
communicated to you?

_____ did these responses handle the situation for you each time?

_____ how did you feel after responding in each case?

*What is your opinion of this practice in an organization?

(7) You indicated on the screening survey that you _____
buck a rule or policy in order to carry out an assignment.

*What organizational rules or policies have you violated in order to carry out assignments?

Please describe these policies and the situations in which you violated them.

_____ What frequency does _____ represent?

_____ When such situations occur, do they occur at certain regular times in the year?

_____ Who has expectations of you for compliance with each of these policies?

_____ How often is each of them communicated to you?

_____ How is each of them communicated to you?

_____ Are any of these expectations related to certain specific events and/or larger issues?

*How did you feel when faced with the question of violating each of these policies?

*Did your actions handle the situation for you each time?

_____ how did you feel after violating each of these policies?

*What needs to be done in order to prevent such actions from occurring?

(8) You indicated on the screening survey that you _____ receive assignments that are within your training and capability.

*What assignments have you received that have not been within your training and capability?

Please explain how they have exceeded your training and capability.

_____ What frequency does _____ represent?

_____ When such situations occur, do they occur at certain regular times in the year?

_____ Who has had expectations of you concerning completion of these assignments?

_____ How often was each of them communicated to you?

_____ How was each of them communicated to you?

_____ Were any of these expectations related to certain specific events and/or larger issues?

*How did you feel when faced with each of these assignments?

*How did you respond to each of these expectations when they were communicated to you?

_____ did these responses handle the situation for you each time?

_____ how did you feel after responding in each case?

*What judgements about the organization and/or your position have you formed as a result of these experiences?

Inter-Role Conflict

(4,9) You indicated on the screening survey that you _____ are able to act the same regardless of the group you are with (and/or) that you _____ work with two or more groups who operate quite differently.

*Which groups do you work with that have different expectations of your behavior?

Please point out the different behaviors required with different groups.

Please point out conflicting behaviors required by different groups.

_____ What frequencies do _____ and/or _____ represent?

_____ When such situations occur, do they occur at certain regular times in the year?

_____ How is each of these expectations communicated to you?

_____ How often is each of them communicated to you?

_____ Are any of these expectations related to certain specific events and/or larger issues?

*How do you feel when faced with each of these expectations?

*How do you respond to these expectations when they are communicated to you?

_____ do these responses handle the situation for you each time?

_____ how do you feel after responding in each case?

*Do you believe that this aspect of your work prevents longevity in a position as yours?

Inter-Sender Conflict

(10) You indicated on the screening survey that you _____ receive incompatible requests from two or more people.

*What incompatible requests from two or more people have you been expected to comply with?

Please describe how these requests were incompatible.

_____ What frequency does _____ represent?

_____ When such situations occur, do they occur at certain regular times in the year?

_____ Who has had these expectations of you concerning each of these requests?

_____ How was each of them communicated to you?

_____ How often was each of them communicated to you?

_____ Were any of these expectations related to certain specific events and/or larger issues?

*How did you feel when faced with each of these requests?

*How did you respond to each of these expectations when they were communicated to you?

_____ did these responses handle the situation for you each time?

_____ how did you feel after responding in each case?

*Do you believe that your position is especially prone to such situations?

_____ please elaborate on your view.

(11) You indicated on the screening survey that you _____ do things that are apt to be accepted by one person and not accepted by others.

*Which of your job activities are apt to meet the expectations of one person but not those of others?

Please describe which activities are likely to be judged in this way by which people, and why? (incl. how communicate expectations and how often?)

_____ What frequency does _____ represent?

_____ When such situations occur, do they occur at certain regular times in the year?

_____ Are these expectations related to certain specific events and/or larger issues?

*How do you feel when faced with each of these situations?

*How do you respond to each of these evaluations when they are communicated to you?

_____ do these responses handle the situation for you each time?

_____ how do you feel after responding in each case?

*What judgements have you formed of the individuals involved?

_____ please elaborate on these views.

APPENDIX C

Authorization to Use the Role Conflict
Measure of Rizzo, House and Lirtzman

Springfield Technical Community College




ONE ARMORY SQUARE, SPRINGFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS 01103 • TELEPHONE (401) 78-7822

COUNSELING
CENTER

*

I give Patrick Tighe permission to utilize the role conflict items from the questionnaire on role conflict and role ambiguity published in the June, 1970 issue of Administrative Science Quarterly in the article entitled "Role Conflict and Ambiguity in Complex Organizations." This authorization is sufficient to allow Mr. Tighe use of the above noted items. Additional separate authorizations from Robert J. House and John R. Rizzo are not necessary.

Signed,


Sidney I. Lifitzman

Date:

11/19/83

* permission requires a copy of the questionnaire or other materials incorporating the HRL scale, and
Copy of any final published or unpublished reports.



APPENDIX D

Cover Letter to Quantitative Questionnaire

March 17, 1984

Dear Colleague,

I would like to request your assistance. I have enclosed a brief questionnaire which I am using as part of my doctoral dissertation study focusing on Directors of Housing and Directors of Student Activities. The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather descriptive background information and to determine if respondents have experienced role conflict in their current jobs. Generally speaking, role conflict experiences result from situations which involve the occurrence of two or more expectations (relative to one's work role or behavior) such that compliance with one of the expectations makes compliance with the other(s) more difficult.

You have been selected to participate in this study since you are currently serving in one of the two positions noted above or performing equivalent functions although your official job title may vary. Therefore, I would like to ask you to take a few minutes of your time to complete the enclosed questionnaire. The primary goal of this study is to assess the degree to which various types of role conflict are experienced. Responses to the questionnaire will also be used to identify individuals who will be asked to serve as interviewees for the secondary part of this study.

Please respond to all of the items in Section I and II of the questionnaire. The completed questionnaire may be returned to me in the enclosed stamped self-addressed envelope. If you could place it in the mail by March 26 at the latest, I would greatly appreciate it. Earlier responses are welcome and helpful.

All responses will be kept strictly confidential. The code number in the upper left-hand corner will be used only by me to identify respondents for purposes of further correspondence.

I apologize for the impersonal form letter format which is utilized in the interest of time. I would also like to extend my sincere thanks for your willingness to take the time to assist me in this endeavor. Please feel free to call on me should I be able to reciprocate in any way in the future.

Sincerely,

Patrick Tighe
16 Cooper Street
Springfield, MA 01108

APPENDIX E

Letter Confirming Interview

Dear _____,

Per our recent telephone conversation, I am writing to confirm the details of our appointment scheduled for _____. Although the interview should take close to two hours, it would be helpful if you could reserve two and one-half hours on your schedule to allow us some leeway.

The interview will utilize open-ended questions to enable you to describe role conflict situations you have experienced in your current position. You indicated on the quantitative questionnaire for this study that you have experienced the following types of role conflict situations in your current position:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____
13. _____

Therefore, your interview will involve discussing these situations in more depth. It would be helpful if you would reflect on these situations beforehand in preparation for the interview. The interview will be taped and then transcribed to facilitate analysis of responses.

I would like to remind you that this study is being conducted as doctoral dissertation research. The anonymity of all subjects is guaranteed. In addition, subjects will be allowed access to the recorded material from their interview that is presented in the study. Copies of conclusions reached in the study will also be available to the subjects upon request.

Please contact me immediately (Work: 413-781-7822, x3882, or Home: 413-733-0219) if any of the information in this letter conflicts with your understanding of the agreements we previously reached or if you have any other questions concerning the interview. If you must withdraw from the interview for any reason, please notify me as soon as possible so that I can make alternate plans in accordance with my own timetable.

Once again, let me extend my sincere thanks for your interest and assistance. I truly appreciate your taking the time for this interview. I look forward to meeting with you.

Sincerely,

Patrick Tigue
16 Cooper Street
Springfield, MA 01108

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