

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 325 940

EA 022 428

AUTHOR Chang, Derray; Goldman, Paul
 TITLE Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity among Junior High School Administrators in Taiwan.
 PUB DATE Apr 90
 NOTE 26p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Boston, MA, April 16-20, 1990).
 PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150)
 EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
 DESCRIPTORS Administrators; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; Job Analysis; *Junior High Schools; Occupational Information; Organizational Climate; Organizational Communication; Organizational Objectives; *Role Conflict; Role Perception; *Role Theory; *School Administration; *Secondary School Teachers
 IDENTIFIERS *Taiwan

ABSTRACT

Specific role stress situations experienced by Taiwanese junior high school administrators and their sources, with a focus on Chinese cultural characteristics, are investigated. A questionnaire mailed to 225 administrators in 25 junior high schools yielded 211 responses, a 93 percent response rate. Semistructured interviews were conducted with 16 respondents. Findings indicate that role conflict and role ambiguity are separate constructs and have different sources. Role conflict stems from contradictory external and internal demands, a heavy workload, and incompatible school subcultures and is more likely to reduce job dissatisfaction and increase somatic complaints. Role ambiguity is created by inadequate communication, administrative inexperience, frequent personnel changes, and organizational growth. A conclusion is that Chinese cultural norms appear to amplify role stress. Two tables and one figure are included. (25 references) (LMI)

 * Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
 * from the original document. *

ED325940

**ROLE CONFLICT AND ROLE AMBIGUITY AMONG JUNIOR
HIGH SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS IN TAIWAN**

Derray Chang
Department of Elementary Education
Taiwan Provincial Hsinchu Teachers' College
No. 521, Nan-Ta Road
Hsinchu, Taiwan

and

Paul Goldman
University of Oregon
College of Education
Eugene, OR 97403-1215

Paper presented at the Annual Meetings of the American Educational Research Association, Boston, April, 1990

ABSTRACT

A survey of 211 Taiwanese junior high school administrators measured and compared role conflict and role ambiguity. Specific stressors included conflict between exam preparation and cultivating good citizens, between student rights and student discipline, between universalistic and particularistic claims. Chinese cultural norms appear to amplify role stress.

U S DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
 Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

P. Goldman

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

EA 022 428



ROLE CONFLICT AND ROLE AMBIGUITY AMONG JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS IN TAIWAN

Neither school administrator role stress nor the potential impact of cultural settings, norms, and values on that role stress have been extensively examined in the school administration literature. This research focuses upon the specific role stress situations Taiwanese junior high school administrators experience, and investigates their potential sources, including the influence of Chinese cultural characteristics.

Role conflicts occur when administrators confront the "simultaneous occurrence of two or more role expectations such that compliance with one would make compliance with the other more difficult" (Katz & Kahn, 1978, p. 204). As elsewhere, role conflicts in schools are inevitable because constituents have varied agendas and intentions of their own, creating divergent expectations for school staff, especially administrators (Silver, 1983, p. 247). Conflicts may be exacerbated when institutional expectations and cultural values conflict with one another, and either of these may be at odds with the individual's personality (Getzels et al., 1968, pp. 108-119). Arguably such conflicts may be particularly painful when bureaucratic structures are overlaid on traditional cultures as occurred when Taiwan adopted a modified version of the American educational system. Conflicts also may arise because most administrators experience role overload and are so busy they must try to carry out compatible role responsibilities which cannot be accomplished simultaneously because of time constraints (Kahn et al., 1964, p. 19)

Role ambiguity is distinct from role conflict, and is a function of the discrepancy between the individual's present skill, information, and knowledge and the skill, information, and knowledge required for adequate performance in a job. Ambiguity results when role occupants have a poor understanding of role expectations. Role ambiguity has, however, often been confused in the literature with role conflict. Getzels and Guba (1955), for instance, used ambiguity in questionnaire items designed to measure role conflict. Role ambiguity exists in many organizations. Kahn et al. (1964, pp. 75-78) suggest that three general organizational conditions significantly contribute to role ambiguity: organizational complexity, managerial philosophies about communication, and rapid organizational change. The latter includes organizational growth and technical changes that may require alteration in the formal structure and can involve frequent, dislocating personnel changes. The increased size and complexity of an organization, necessarily incorporating greater differentiation and specialization of work activities, may exceed an individual's span of comprehension. Restriction of the communication flow, intentional or not, is another contributor to role ambiguity.

Most role stress research uses the Kahn et al. (1964) role episode model or the Getzels et al. (1968) role behavior model. An example illustrates the difference. Kahn et al. (1964) argue that organizational, interpersonal, and personal factors cause role conflict and role ambiguity, which in turn can cause such specific consequences as job dissatisfaction and somatic

complaints. Getzels et al. (1968), however, suggest that role conflicts in a social system have their roots in the culture in which the system operates. These circumstances interact in the case of corporal punishment in schools. Although corporal punishment has been prohibited in Taiwanese junior high schools, many teachers see themselves acting as surrogate parents, and believe their use of the rod on the students is a duty, just as it was for traditional Chinese teachers.

Past research findings support both approaches. Role conflict has been demonstrated to be positively related to: frequent boundary spanning activities (Kahn et al., 1964), formalized organizational requirements for employees possessing professional norms (Corwin, 1961; Getzels & Guba, 1954), limited participation in decision making (Jackson, 1983; Morris, 1976; Schuler, 1980), heavy workload (Caplan et al., 1980), and inadequate supervisory support (Abdel-Halim, 1982). Role ambiguity is positively associated with: lack of written rules and job descriptions (Jackson & Schuler, 1985; Rizzo et al., 1970; Rogers & Molnar, 1976), lack of participation in decision making (Jackson, 1983; Morris, 1976; Schuler, 1980), job overload (Caplan et al., 1980), absence of supervisory support (Abdel-Halim, 1982), and inexperience on the job. Although most studies cited above have been conducted in noneducational settings, research specifically on schools, both in the United States (Hansen, 1984; Kottkamp and Travlos, 1986; Morris, 1976) and in Taiwan (Huang, 1985; Liao, 1986), report similar findings.

METHODOLOGY

Our research population is administrators in urban junior high schools in Taiwan. These schools usually house from 1,000 to 3,000 thirteen to fifteen year-olds and are the primary arena where young men and women are sorted into academic and vocational streams. At the end of their third year, students take a qualifying exam for entry into public academic high schools. Only 30 percent are successful and accepted for admission. The remainder attend vocational high schools. Eventually, about 40 percent of the students from academic high schools successfully pass university-level entrance exams. Junior high schools are organized as traditional, monocratic bureaucracies with standardized organizational charts. Typically the principal has four office heads who assist in school management: the teaching office head manages instructional programs, the discipline office head manages student discipline and extra-curricular activities, the general affairs head manages school business, and the guidance head handles counselling. Each office head has two to four section chiefs, who directly supervise professional staffs. Career paths typically take educators from teacher through section chief and office head to the principalship. Only a small number subsequently move into central administration.

The research used both a self-administered questionnaire and a semistructured interview as data sources. With the exception of items developed to assess religious and philosophical attitudes and those on boundary spanning and formalization, questionnaire items and scales were taken from previous research on role

role conflict and ambiguity . . . in Taiwan, p. 5

conflict. Specifically, role conflict and role ambiguity items were taken from Rizzo et al. (1970), participation in decision-making from Vroom (1963), and supervisory support items from Caplan et al. (1980). Items were translated into Chinese and pretested. In Fall, 1988 the questionnaire was distributed to 225 administrators at 25 randomly selected junior high schools in a large Taiwanese city. The return rate was 93 percent.

Sixteen respondents were interviewed using a semi-structured instrument designed to provide examples and amplifications of potential role conflict situations. The respondents came from six schools: Two are small-sized, three are of moderate size, and one is large. Later analysis of survey data indicated that half the respondents reported role conflict scores above the group mean, and half of below the group mean. Interviews averaged two hours in length, ranging from one-and-a-half to three hours, were tape recorded, and translated into English during transcription.

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS: ROLE CONFLICT

In order to assess the integrity of the role conflict and role ambiguity constructs in the Taiwanese setting, factor analysis was performed using the varimax rotated factor loadings method contained in the SPSSX program. Results, shown in Table 1, indicate clearly that role conflict and role ambiguity are statistically as well as conceptually distinguishable concepts for this sample. The findings, consistent with Schuler et al. (1977) and Schwab et al. (1983), imply that role conflict is a viable construct for researching Taiwanese schools as it is unlikely that the response pattern could occur without clear role conceptions

role conflict and ambiguity . . . in Taiwan, p. 6

and the realization that role expectations may be incompatible. Three results suggest not only that role conflict could have similar sources as in Western countries, but also that a culture stressing traditional values and with very formal bureaucratic systems may be a viable research arena.

I N S E R T T A B L E 1 A B O U T H E R E

The distribution of responses on the role conflict scale was virtually normal with a mean virtually at scale's midpoint (3.01). These are encouraging results, suggesting that the extensive research history on role conflict has developed measures that are robust and usable without fundamental modification in comparative research. The distributions resemble those reported by researchers in American schools (Eisenhauer, et al., 1984; Kottkamp & Travlos, 1986).

Interpretation of findings for role ambiguity is less clearcut. Only 5 percent of respondents reported frequent problems with role ambiguity and an additional 20 percent noted occasional problems. The 23 principals reported a mean of 1.84, contrasting sharply with the mean of 3.63 among the American elementary and secondary principals Eisenhauer et al. (1984) studied. How can we explain this extreme difference? One explanation may be related to the Chinese people's reluctant attitude toward change (Hsu (1981, p. 372). When Taiwanese educational leaders are forced to alter traditional practices, they prefer to move moderately and slowly rather than radically and quickly. American educational leaders, by contrast, profess

role conflict and ambiguity . . . in Taiwan, p. 7

to value change. Stability in Taiwanese schools probably contributes principals' role clarity.

Compared to their American counterparts, Taiwanese principals have a longer tenure as principals. Taiwanese principals seek the principalship as a capstone of a career in education. They usually serve in small schools for several years, move to larger ones, and then retire from their principalship. Long-term commitment to the principalship increases the attitudinal and experiential bases required for role clarity. Moreover, the unitary national educational system and the homogeneity of Taiwanese schools makes principalships quite similar. Thus, they may have less difficulty in transferring role conceptions when they move from one school to another.

In Table 2, we present two regression equations showing how organizational and sociodemographic factors affect role conflict and role ambiguity. Perceptions of heavy workload and frequent boundary spanning contribute noticeably to role conflict. Family roles for married administrators may conflict with their administrative responsibility. Supervisory support, advanced academic training, and preference for Confucianism as a personal philosophy appear to reduce role conflict. In addition, participation in decision-making, supervisory support, as well as boundary spanning, formalization, and tenure in school administration seem to decrease role ambiguity.

I N S E R T T A B L E 2 A B O U T H E R E

Analysis of interview responses allows us to elaborate and interpret these findings. Administrators reported five distinct

role conflict and ambiguity . . . in Taiwan, p. 8

areas where they face role conflicts: (1) conflict between cultivating good citizens and preparing students for entrance examinations; (2) conflicts that result from internal and external boundary-spanning; (3) conflict between respecting student rights and maintaining school discipline; (4) conflict between bureaucratic linking of merit and reward and cultural norms involving personal ties and obligations; and (5) role overload.

Most frequently reported is the conflict between the goal of cultivating good citizens and the goal of preparing students for entrance examinations. The official goal of Taiwanese junior high education is to cultivate good citizens by an equal development of their moral, intellectual, physical, social, and esthetic lives. Parents, however, are primarily concerned with their children passing the entrance exam for academic senior high schools.

What the Ministry expects is totally different from what parents expect. The Ministry wants schools to pay less attention to entrance examinations; the pressure from parents simply does not allow me to do so. (Principal 5)

Most schools are engaged in "examination wars." If one school loses the battle, parents transfer their children to a neighboring "star school," which has a good record on the exam. Thus, the failure of students on the exam also means the failure of the school to maintain its student population. One principal tried to keep students from transferring to the neighboring star school, but his efforts were rejected by parents who told him that "as soon as the school could successfully pass an adequate number

role conflict and ambiguity . . . in Taiwan, p. 9

of students to prestigious senior high schools, they would transfer back their children" (Principal 1).

To prepare students for the entrance exam, many schools group students into ability tracks, provide extra sessions after regular school hours, allow teachers to substitute English and mathematics for handcraft and home economics, use exam reference books and test papers developed by private publishers as instructional resources, and increase classroom tests. These activities are formally prohibited by the Ministry.

While the official educational goals relate to national modernization, the importance of passing entrance exams is rooted in the Chinese culture in Taiwan. In traditional China, examinees passing imperial exams were immediately recognized as scholars and became high-ranking officials. Those who failed remained in lower social statuses (Weber, 1951; Hsu's, 1981). In modern Taiwan education is crucial to high social status, and entrance exams provide the only access to higher education. Success on the exams means hope and a bright future, while failure means despair and perhaps another stressful year of preparing the exam.

A second source of role conflict results from boundary spanning: The more exposure to external demands, the more administrators feel role conflict. Intra-organizational responsibilities (e.g. serving as liaison between two or more offices) also generate role conflict, and conflicts between teaching and discipline offices are common. Administrators in the discipline office complain that they have to handle problem student behaviors caused by the ability grouping practice of the

role conflict and ambiguity . . . in Taiwan, p. 10

teaching office. Teaching office administrators, on the other hand, complain that student activities coordinated by discipline offices disrupt normal classroom instruction. Conflicts also exist between accounting and personnel staffs on the one hand and "mainstream administrators" on the other. The personnel and accounting offices are detached from other school administrative offices to provide checks-and-balances. Although the principal can select the administrators of teaching, discipline, guidance, and general affairs offices, the school accounting and personnel staffs are appointed by the city government. Personnel and accounting staffs have their own reference groups outside of the school (e.g., the accounting associations) and develop a subculture different from the dominant culture of the school. A teaching head noted that "I don't like to keep in touch with the personnel and accounting offices. They have not been teachers. They don't have educational concepts and tend to be very bureaucratic" (Office Head 3). Supervisory support seems to mitigate role conflict if uncomfortable personal interactions and potentially unpopular decisions can be delegated upwards. It is also possible that acceptance of Confucian ideology--with its appreciation of both balance and contradiction in the world--may help individuals keep conflicts in perspective and make them less personally upsetting.

A third conflict, that between respecting student rights and maintaining student discipline, is particularly problematic for administrators in charge of student discipline. Formal ideology states that the administrators in charge of student discipline

role conflict and ambiguity . . . in Taiwan, p. 11

should be patient, and changes in the behavior of problem students should come through student "counselling." Treating problem students with humanity, however, is more easily said than accomplished, because of huge school size and understaffing. Administrators who must deal with perhaps 10 discipline cases each day, in addition to their already heavy daily routine probably are unable to change the behaviors of problem students through counselling alone. A discipline head described his situation:

Student discipline problems seem to emerge constantly. For instance, this morning I was dealing with two students smoking in the rest room. In the mean time, an English teacher referred to me four students who had disrupted her class. An hour later, I needed to attend a school meeting. In this situation, I think it is difficult for me to treat every student client with much patience. (Office Head 7)

Because of time pressures, when student problem behaviors occur, administrators tend to resort to a traditional resolution: oral exhortation plus corporal punishment. A former discipline head described the necessity of corporal punishment:

When I was discipline head, I knew corporal punishment had its harmful effects and limitations, but if I wanted effective student discipline [with] the time and manpower I had, I could not avoid dutiously exercised corporal punishment. Most students could accept the punishment as long as I had informed them of their wrong doing and I did not hurt them. (Office Head 4)

role conflict and ambiguity . . . in Taiwan, p. 12

Fourth, conflict exists between managing schools bureaucratically and favoring those with personal connections or influence. Bureaucratic norms of impersonality and the traditional pull of personal relationships are often incompatible. In his article "Some characteristics of Chinese bureaucratic behavior," Yang (1959, p. 163) notes "while formalistic impersonality was recognized as a basic norm in Chinese bureaucratic behavior, its functioning was seriously disrupted by the constant pressure of the bureaucrat's informal social and personal relationships." Without a determination to stick to formal requirements, administrators find it difficult to resist the demands of friends, relatives, and especially influential others who ask favors in hiring personnel, the purchasing of school equipment, and the assigning students to special classes.

Principals are the chief personnel officers of schools and select or make hiring recommendations. They usually feel obligated to make personnel decisions on the basis of merit. This professional requirement, however, may conflict with the expectations of relatives, friends, faculty members, and influential others who want principals to hire their recommended candidates. A senior office head of a "star" school described the criteria his principal has used to select the teachers who want to transfer to his school:

The school has a good reputation and a good location. Each year many teachers want to transfer to the school. Although the principal prefers energetic and experienced candidates, relatives and friends, faculty members, city councilors,

role conflict and ambiguity . . . in Taiwan, p. 13

legislators, city government officers, and party leaders expect the principal to hire their recommended candidates. The principal has difficulty resisting their imploring. Consequently, a candidate without any personal connection will have only a small chance of being selected. (Office Head 4)

In his study of 217 Taiwanese elementary and secondary principals, Ko (1987, p. 124) found that 73% encountered outside pressure in their hiring decisions. The proportion of the surveyed principals who have given preferential treatment to the recommended candidates is unknown, but our interviews suggest it is high.

In addition to hiring decisions, many politicians (especially city councilors) like to ask favors on school construction contracts and equipment purchases. One former general affairs head described the involvement of city councilors in such contracts and purchases:

Many businessmen are concurrently serving as city councilors. Their companies, or the companies owned by their relatives or friends, may sell school equipment or undertake school construction jobs. If construction jobs require a public bidding procedure, they try to make their companies qualified for these jobs. If two city councilors are interested in the same construction job or purchase, they will make a deal behind the scenes. Thus, conflicts of interest can be avoided. (Office Head 4)

Finally, a large proportion of respondents reported that their heavy workload reduces their time and energy to do all that is expected of them. The problem is mainly the daily routine caused by the large school size and the limited administrative manpower. Many administrators have to work evenings and weekends, and their spouses and children may complain that they have spent an inadequate amount of time with the family. A teaching head described the problem:

Because of my sense of duty, whenever students are at school, I want to be at school. I also frequently stay overnight at school, especially when I concurrently served as school security secretary several months ago. Last year, from Teachers' day to the Lantern Festival [September 28 to March 2], I stayed at school nearly every night. I feel I cannot take care of my children, and I feel guilty about my wife. Although she accepts the way I have to work, my children complain that "Daddy is not at home." (Office Head 3)

According to Getzels et al. (1968), when need dispositions and expectations clash, role conflict is likely. Inability to implement their personal educational ideals is frustrating to these administrators. Some administrators are concerned with the extreme competition caused by the entrance exam and the inflexibility of current curriculum. Others are concerned with the inadequate attention schools have paid to low achieving students, the improper disciplinary attitude of parents, and the failure of schools to address moral education.

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS: ROLE AMBIGUITY

Results for role ambiguity were quite different from those reported for role conflict. Questionnaire respondents reported a mean of 1.98 in a 5-point role ambiguity scale. About 5% often experience, 20% sometimes encounter, and 75% seldom confront role ambiguity. Most interview respondents revealed that they have a clear understanding of their job responsibility, the actions to accomplish their responsibilities, and the evaluation results of their performance.

Because administrators are certain of their specified school objectives, their responsibilities, and the actions necessary to accomplish their responsibilities, the concept of organized anarchies suggested by Cohen et al. (1972) may not be as applicable to Taiwanese junior high school administration as it seems to American school settings. They argue that educational organizations can best be understood as organized anarchies because of three special properties: The goals are ambiguous, the technology of action is unclear, and the participation of members is unstable. On the other hand, the concept may apply in Taiwan in higher education, in which the goals are less specified, the organizations are less bureaucratic, and the control of the governing organizations is weaker.

The interview respondents, however, reported that when role ambiguity did exist, it was caused by organizational change. Changes in school personnel create ambiguity for persons transferred and also for their associates. A section chief of a discipline office gave an example:

The handling of the essay contest of Chinese culture rejuvenation used to belong to the teaching chief. The current teaching chief is a new incumbent. She insists that the handling of that contest should belong to me and denies that her predecessor has ever dealt with that contest. To find out who is wrong and who is right, we have to go to the archivist to find the old documents. (Section Chief 1)

The growth that requires school reorganization also produces role ambiguity. Because of the increasing importance of student counselling, the guidance office was established in each Taiwanese junior high school few years ago. Because of a lack of manpower, however, many tasks the guidance office is expected to take over still remain in the hands of the discipline office or the teaching office. Disputes over those tasks occur at some schools. For example, one teaching head complained that he has to deal with special education issues which should belong to the guidance office. A chief of a discipline office complained that he has made many efforts to persuade the guidance office to accept the task of keeping the teachers' home visit records.

The last reported role ambiguity situation is caused by the reserved feedback from role senders, especially subordinates. Those role senders are often unwilling to criticize the administrators in order to maintain a friendly personal relationship. One section chief of a discipline office commented:

My teachers always praise me and do not want to criticize me. For example, Teacher Lee always says I am a hard working administrator, and Teacher Chang always appreciates the

role conflict and ambiguity . . . in Taiwan, p. 17

service I have offered to teachers. Of course, I like to get positive feedback, but I also want to improve myself and my job. I know I may have done some things wrong. If they can tell me, I think I won't be hurt. What I want is not only their praise but also their real expectations of my job.

(Section Chief 1)

Another way to present the findings is to combine characteristics of role conflict and role ambiguity. Dichotomizing the responses of the 211 questionnaire respondents and integrating the results of the regressions in Tables 1 and 2 provides the basis of Figure 1. The information in each quadrant summarizes organizational and demographic characteristics. For instance, in the low conflict and high ambiguity situation, administrators tend to report relatively low levels of boundary spanning, formalization, participation in decision making, workload, and supervisory responsibility. They also tend to be female, have a short administrative tenure, work at guidance offices, or serve at the section chief positions.

I N S E R T F I G U R E 1 A B O U T H E R E

One section chief is a good example of an administrator with low role conflict and high role ambiguity. She complained that her principal views the position as ancillary, and does not invite her to participate in school decisions even in her area. She keeps close contact with her student clients, but seldom interacts with external constituents. She feels her job lacks a clear-cut role description and her role overlaps with that of school disciplinarians. She enjoys her current low level of workload,

role conflict and ambiguity . . . in Taiwan, p. 18

which allows her more free time to study an in-service program than did her former position at a teaching office, but she feels unhappy with her principal because of the lack of trust and support of her principal.

A male Office Head reported high role conflict and low role ambiguity. He has been a school administrator for 18 years and is involved both with the curriculum and with the faculty. His clear understanding of school operations comes from long service and close contacts with teachers, parents, and local community leaders. However, he complained that parents and local community leaders exercise strong pressure on him to promote students regardless of performance on the entrance exam. Parents' demands go against the regulations designed to reduce pressure on students. This bothers him, and he indicated he would like to avoid the dilemma.

Another Office Head reported low role conflict and low of role ambiguity. She has been a teaching head for 10 years; familiarity with her position provides a clear role conception. During the interview, she reported that she has learned a variety of administrative skills from her principal, her administrative experience, and an in-service program she is taking. She is able to resolve the conflicts she occasionally encounters at her job. Where she cannot, she asks the help of her principal. Her principal trusts her, gives her autonomy, and often invites her to participate in school decisions. Although she is very busy, she feels very satisfied with her job. Because of the support and

trust of her principal, she is willing to do extra work for the school and the principal.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

On the basis of the research findings, two conclusions can be made. First, role conflict and role ambiguity are separate constructs conceptually and appear to have different sources for school administrators. Role conflict, predictably comes from contradictory external and internal demands, a heavy burden of work, and incompatible school subcultures. By contrast, role ambiguity, much less onerous, seems to arise from inadequate communication, administrative inexperience, frequent personnel changes, and organizational growth. Role conflict, by implication, is more likely than role ambiguity, to reduce job dissatisfaction and increase somatic complaints. Second, the Kahn et al. model is useful in identifying potential sources and consequences of role stress, but is weak in that it has not paid attention to the cultural dimension of role stress. The Getzels et al. (1968) model notes this factor and holds up well under the cross-cultural scrutiny of these data. Many of the role conflict situations experienced by administrators have their sources in the Chinese culture of Taiwan. However, without further research in a multi-cultural setting, we can only guess whether these reported conflicts are characteristic of Chinese administrators' personalities or result from organizational and political pressures more-or-less unique to Taiwan.

REFERENCES

- Abdel-Halim, A. A. (1982). Social support and managerial affective responses to job stress. *Journal of Occupational Behavior*, 3, 281-295.
- Brief, A. P., & Aldag, R. J. (1976). Correlates of role indices. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 61, 468-472.
- Caplan, R. D., et al. (1980). *Job demands and worker health: Main effects and occupational differences*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Cohen, M. D., et al. (1972). A garbage can model of organizational choice. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 17, 1-25.
- Corwin, R. G. (1961). The professional employee: A study of conflict of nursing roles. *American Journal of Sociology*, 66, 604-615.
- Eisenhauer, J. E., et al. (1984). Role conflict, role ambiguity, and school principals' job robustness. *Journal of Experimental Education*, 53(2), 86-90.
- Getzels, J. W., & Guba, E. G. (1954). Role, role conflict, and effectiveness: An empirical study. *American Sociological Review*, 19, 164-175.
- Getzels, J. W., & Guba, E. G. (1955). Role conflict and personality. *Journal of Personality*, 24, 74-85.
- Getzels, J. W., et al. (1968). *Educational administration as a social process*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Hansen, D. J. W. (1984). *Elementary principals' role conflicts*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Utah.
- Hsu, F. L. K. (1981). *Americans & Chinese: Passage to differences* (3rd ed.). Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii.
- Jackson, S. E. (1983). Participation in decision-making as a strategy for reducing job-related strain. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 68, 3-19.
- Jackson, S. E., & Schuler, R. S. (1985). A meta-analysis and conceptual critique of research on role ambiguity and role conflict in work settings. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 36, 16-78.
- Kahn, R. L., et al. (1964). *Organizational stress: Studies in role conflict and ambiguity*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Katz, D., & Kahn, R. L. (1978). *The social psychology of organizations* (2nd ed.). New York: John Wiley & Sons.

role conflict and ambiguity . . . in Taiwan, p. 21

- Ko, C. S. (1987). Hsueh hsiao hsing cheng ling tao [The study of school administrative leadership] (3rd ed.). Taipei, Taiwan: Tai-lan Publications.
- Kotickamp, R. B., & Travlos, A. L. (1986). Selected job stressors, emotional exhaustion, job satisfaction, and thrust behavior of the high school principal. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 32(3), 234-248.
- Morris, J. H. (1976). Organizational antecedents and employee responses to role ambiguity and role conflict. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Oregon, Eugene.
- Rizzo, J. R. et al. (1970). Role conflict and ambiguity in complex organizations. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 15, 150-163.
- Rogers, D. L., & Molnar, J. (1976). Organizational antecedents of role conflict and ambiguity in top-level administrators. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 21, 598-610.
- Schuler, R. S. (1980). A role and expectancy perception model of participation in decision making. *Academy of Management Journal*, 23(2), 331-340.
- Schuler, R. S., et al. (1977). Role conflict and ambiguity: A scale analysis. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, 20, 111-128.
- Schwab, R. L., et al. (1983). Assessing role conflict and role ambiguity: A cross validation study. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 43(2), 587-593.
- Silver, P. (1983). *Educational administration: Theoretical perspectives on practice and research*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Weber, M. (1951). *The religion of China*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press.
- Yang, C. K. (1959). Some characteristics of Chinese bureaucratic behavior. In D. S. Nivision & A. F. Wright (Eds.), *Confucianism in action* (pp. 134-164). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Table 1. Varimax Rotated Factor Loadings of Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity

Item	Ambiguity	Conflict
Role Ambiguity		
I know how to complete my responsibilities	.71	.08
I know exactly what is expected of me	.71	.01
I know what my responsibilities are	.66	.08
I know the rating my superiors will give me on my performance	.65	.03
My superiors provide clear explanation of tasks assigned to me	.52	.12
I feel certain about how much authority I have on my job	.52	-.12
Role Conflict		
To adapt to the school environment, I cannot not fulfill my ideals in education	.04	.67
I cannot do things according to my ways	.05	.67
I have to buck a rule or policy in order to carry out an assignment	.08	.60
As a school administrator, I feel I cannot take care of my family	.00	.51
Due to limited time and energy, I cannot fulfill all the expectations of others	.21	.51
I do things that are apt to be accepted by one person and not by others	.07	.51
I work with two or more groups who operate quite differently	-.32	.50
I receive incompatible requests from two or more people	-.33	.46

Table 2. Multiple Regression of Organizational and Sociodemographic Variables on Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity

Independent Variables	Role Conflict			Role Ambiguity		
	r	Beta	Partitioned R ²	r	Beta	Partitioned R ²
Organizational Variables						
Boundary spanning	.27**	.21**	.06	-.45**	-.15*	.07
Formalization	.18*	.07	.01	-.30**	-.16**	.05
Participation in decisions	-.04	-.05	.00	-.58*	-.36**	.21
Quantitative workload	.36**	.34**	.12	-.35**	-.06	.02
Supervisory support	-.11	-.21**	.02	-.49**	-.21**	.10
Sociodemographic Variables						
Academic degree	-.10	.15*	.02	-.02	.04	.00
Marital status	.14*	.15*	.02	-.02	.04	.00
Preferred philosophy	-.18**	-.22**	.04	-.09	-.08	.01
Tenure in administration	.24**	.05	.01	-.26**	-.19**	.05
Multiple R²			.31			.51
F Value			9.92**			22.87**

Note: The partitioned R² values are calculated from the formula $R^2_{Y.12...k} = \sum b_i r_{Yi}$ (the formula from Applied multiple regression\correlation analysis for the behavior science. [p.100] by J. Cohen and P. Cohen, 1983, Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates).

N=211. df=9,201. *p≤.05. **p≤.01.

Figure 1

Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity

ROLE CONFLICT

High

Low

H
i
g
h

R
O
L
E

A
M
B
I
G
U
I
T
Y

L
o
w

<u>High Conflict - High Ambiguity</u> (1)	<u>Low Conflict - High Ambiguity</u> (2)
Low participation in decisions Low supervisory support	Low boundary spanning Low formalization Low participation in decisions Low quantitative workload Low supervision responsibility Female administrators Short tenure in administration Guidance office Section chief
<u>High Conflict - Low Ambiguity</u> (3)	<u>Low Conflict - Low Ambiguity</u> (4)
High boundary spanning High formalization High participation in decisions High quantitative workload High supervision responsibility Long tenure in administration	High participation in decisions High supervisory support

END

U.S. Dept. of Education

Office of Education
Research and
Improvement (OERI).

ERIC

Date Filmed

March 29, 1991