

Antecedents and Consequences of Role Perceptions: A Path Analytic Approach

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Abstract

The antecedents and consequences of role perceptions (role clarity and role conflict) are examined using path analysis. Employees with realistic perceptions of the organization experienced increased role clarity, less role conflict, and tended to be more satisfied. Those individuals who perceived a sense of "fit", or congruence, were more likely to adjust to the work environment in a positive way. They experienced increased job satisfaction. Role conflict, in turn, was associated with reduced job satisfaction. Increased role clarity resulted in better job performance and less role conflict. Finally, increased job satisfaction led to increased job commitment.

Introduction

Roles can be thought of in two ways: (a) as expectations one has about social behavior, and (b) as functions or positions. In an organizational context, roles are expectations that employees have of each other. These may include peer expectations, expectations a supervisor has of a subordinate, or expectations an employee has of his manager. Second, roles are also functions (activities) or positions (jobs) that employees perform for the organization.

When individuals decide to join an organization, they begin to form expectations about social behavior and functions/ positions. During the transition into the organization, the individual compares these expectations (expected roles) with the social behaviors and functions/positions that he or she will engage in (perceived roles). If the expected and perceived roles are different, the individual experiences role ambiguity, or a lack of role clarity. When the perceived roles differ from the enacted roles (actual social behavior and function), the individual experiences role conflict.

Management can play an important part in increasing role clarity and reducing role conflict. If management communicates social and functional role behaviors to the potential employee in a way that reduces the gap between expected and perceived roles, employees will experience role clarity. Additionally, if management helps to assure that perceptions about roles are similar to actual roles, role conflict will be reduced.

Research on role perceptions has examined both

antecedents, such as realism (cf. Feldman, 1976), and consequences, such as job satisfaction, commitment, job involvement (cf. Netemeyer, Johnston, & Burton, 1990), and job performance (cf. Fisher & Gitelson, 1983). Because these studies investigated mainly bivariate relationships, Jackson and Schuler (1985) have called for causal research on the antecedents and consequences of role perceptions.

Causal analysis provides information above and beyond that provided by correlational studies. Correlational studies provide information about the degree to which a change in one variable is accompanied by a change in another variable. No conclusion can be made about whether a change in one causes a change in the other. On the other hand, causal studies provide information to researchers about whether one variable comes before (causes changes in) the second, or after (is the result of changes in) the first. Studying the causes (antecedents of) and results (consequences of) role clarity and role conflict will provide practitioners with valuable information about how best to alter organizational practices to increase role clarity and decrease role conflict. Hence, the purpose of this study is to explore a number of antecedents and consequences of role clarity and role conflict in a path analytic model. [NOTE: A lack of role clarity has also been referred to as role ambiguity (Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970; Berkowitz, 1980). Hence, the theoretical support for hypotheses about role clarity includes research findings on role ambiguity.]

Role Theory

Role theory proposes that when the behaviors expected of an individual are inconsistent--one source of role conflict--the individual may experience stress, become dissatisfied, and not perform as effectively as when expectations imposed on him do not conflict (Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970). Also, when each position in the organization has a clearly defined set of responsibilities, management can compare specified responsibilities to performed tasks and provide direction for performance improvement. If individuals do not have the necessary information about their roles (i.e., role clarity does not exist), they will engage in a variety of coping mechanisms that can result in dissatisfaction, anxiety, and lower performance. We treat role conflict and role clarity as distinctly separate constructs (Schuler, Aldag, & Brief, 1977) because empirical results indicate that their impact on organizations is different (Jackson & Schuler, 1985).

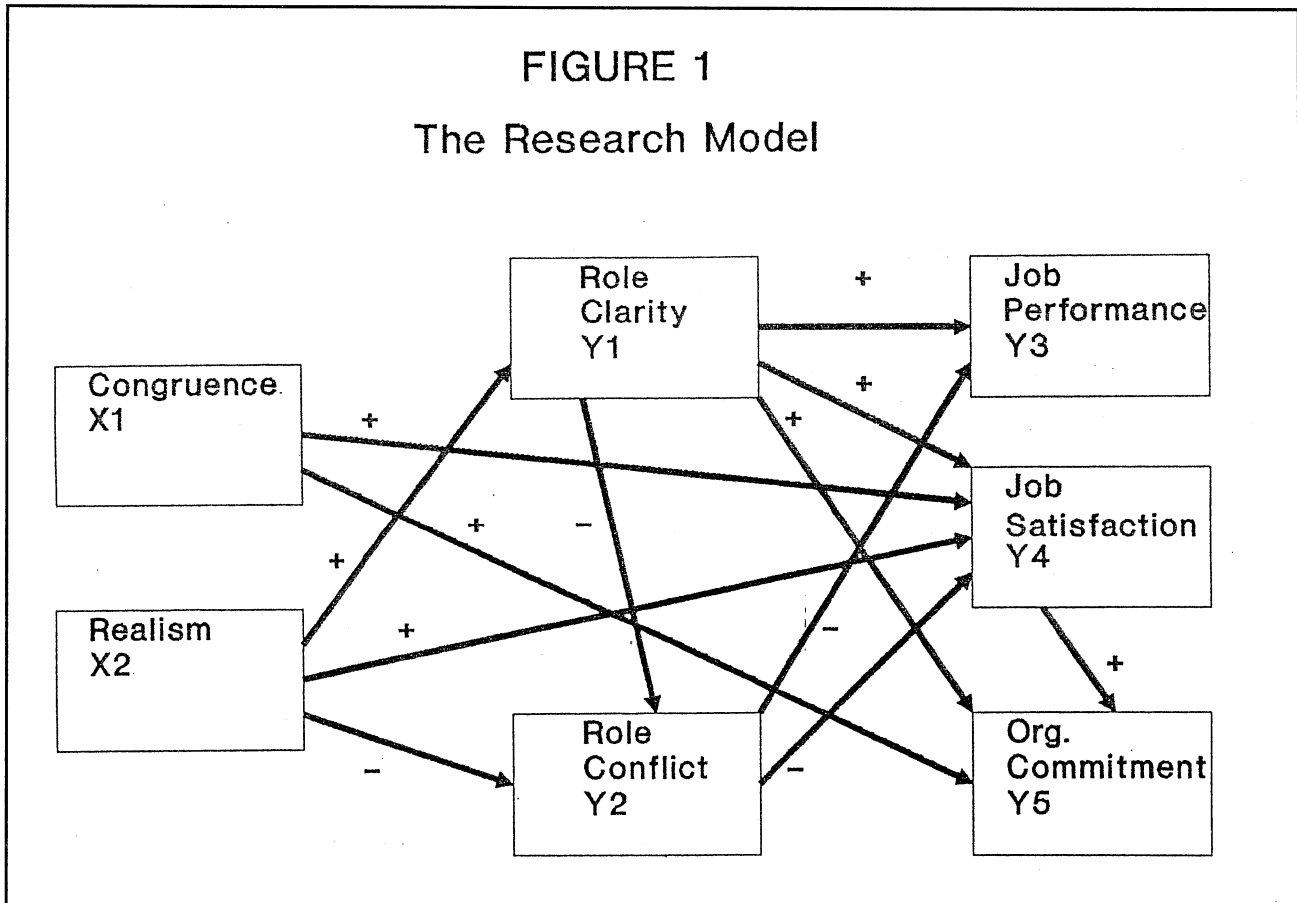
This paper will introduce the research model, provide theoretical support for selected antecedents and consequences of role perceptions, and present the hypotheses. The research model is then tested using path analysis.

The Research Model

The research model includes selected components of employee socialization, role perceptions, and job outcomes. This research model is based on earlier work by Feldman (1976, 1977) and by Dubinski, Ingram, Howell, and Bellenger (1986). Figure 1 shows the variables and hypothesized relationships to be tested.

Employee Socialization

Employee socialization is the process by which an individual "acquires the social knowledge and skills necessary to assume an organizational role" (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979, p. 211) and "comes to appreciate the values, abilities, expected behaviors, and social knowledge essential for assuming an organizational role and for participating as an organizational member" (Louis, 1980, p. 239-230). The ease with which individuals make the transition into the organization affects work adjustment and employee stability. Ultimately, job satisfaction and productivity may be negatively affected if socialization does not occur (Ashford & Cummings, 1985).



Early work by Porter, Lawler, and Hackman (1975) and Feldman (1976, 1977) drew attention to the socialization process from both the individual's perspective (e.g., choice decisions and post-choice cognitive dissonance) and the organization's perspective (e.g., recruiting practices, realistic job previews). This study will examine how two early influences in the socialization process, realism and congruence (Feldman, 1976, 1977), impact role perceptions and job outcomes.

Realism

Realism is the degree to which new employees have a complete and accurate portrait of what life is really like in the firm. Realism often includes knowledge about the job, pay, fringe benefits, work scheduling, opportunities for promotion, co-workers, and so on. Because job candidates frequently have unrealistic expectations about organizations (Wanous, 1977, 1980), realistic job previews (RJP) have been studied as a method for increasing the likelihood that expected and perceived expectations will be similar. Though Reilly, Brown, Blood, and Malatesta (1981) found that RJP's do not help the individual cope with the transition into the organization, other research supports this empirical relationship. Dubinsky, Howell, Ingram, and Bellenger (1986) and Feldman (1976) found that increased realism resulted in increased role clarity. Dubinsky et al. (1986) found an inverse relationship between realism and role conflict. Lawler, Kuleck, Rhode, and Sorenson (1975) found that inconsistencies between pre-entry and post-entry perceptions lead to cognitive dissonance. Porter and Steers (1973) suggested that this cognitive dissonance could lead to job dissatisfaction. From this discussion, the following hypotheses are presented:

- Hypothesis 1a: The greater the realism, the less the role conflict.
- Hypothesis 1b: The greater the realism, the higher the role clarity.
- Hypothesis 1c: The greater the realism, the higher the job satisfaction.

Congruence

In the transition from outsider to insider, employees develop a sense of fit (Jones, 1986; Wanous, 1980), or congruence, in both social and task-oriented organizational environments (Jablin, 1987). "Fit" has been studied from a variety of perspectives: person-job (Caldwell & O'Reilly, 1990), person-organization (VanCouver & Schmidt, 1991), person-group (e.g., cohesiveness) (Yukelson, Weinberg, & Jackson, 1984), and supervisor-subordinate (e.g., leader-member exchange) (Graen & Schiemann, 1978).

Understanding the fit, or congruence, between individuals and organizations is important. When a fit

or match exists, employees feel they are a part of the organization, in a sense "belonging" to it. The usefulness of congruence models has been supported as a way to explain positive work adjustment and employment stability (Vandenberg & Scarpello, 1991). Positive work adjustment should result in positive work outcomes such as increased satisfaction (Lofquist & Dawis, 1969) and organizational commitment (O'Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991). Jackson and Schuler (1985) defined task identity as ". . . the extent to which a person is able to see the impact of his or her efforts in the form of a visible and complete product or service" (pg. 29). They went on to explain that "To the extent task identity items reflect the respondents' awareness of how they fit [emphasis added] into the larger organizational scheme . . . the negative correlation with role ambiguity makes sense" (pg. 30). To summarize, they defined fit as task identity and found a strong inverse relationship between fit and role ambiguity (lack of role clarity). Based on these studies, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- Hypothesis 2a: The more congruence between the individual and the organization, the greater the job satisfaction.
- Hypothesis 2b: The more congruence between the individual and the organization, the greater the organizational commitment.

Role Perceptions

Role perceptions are people's beliefs about what their jobs involve and how to perform them. Two important aspects of role perceptions are role conflict and role clarity.

Role Conflict

Various kinds of conflict can result from incompatibility in requirements of the role, such as conflicts in values, resources, and policies, and role overload (Rizzo et al., 1970). Individuals who have not effectively addressed conflicting demands and have not created decision rules for resolving the conflict may spend too much time dealing with the conflict and too little time dealing with work-related activities (Feldman, 1976). Although some research has found no relationship between role conflict and job satisfaction (Hamner & Tosi, 1974), there is extensive research showing that increased role conflict leads to decreased job satisfaction (Bagozzi, 1978; Brief, Aldag, Van Sell, & Melone, 1979; Churchill, Ford, & Walker, 1976; Ford, Walker, & Churchill, 1976; Schuler, Aldag, & Brief, 1977; Van Sell, Brief, & Schuler, 1981). Job dissatisfaction occurs because role expectations for the individual are inconsistent. This inconsistency can lead to uncertainty which in turn can lead to low job satisfaction. Other studies have shown that increased role conflict leads to lower performance appraisal ratings (Haas, 1964) and low job

performance (Bagozzi, 1978). Hence, the following hypotheses regarding role conflict are proposed:

- Hypothesis 3a: An increase in role conflict results in decreased job satisfaction.
 Hypothesis 3b: An increase in role conflict results in lower job performance.

Role Clarity

Role clarity is defined as an individual's understanding of job expectations, the process for fulfilling these expectations, and the consequences of one's role performance (Van Sell, Brief, & Schuler, 1981). In the absence of role clarity, outcomes for the individual and the organization include dissatisfaction (Churchill, Ford, & Walker, 1976), and tension, anxiety, and lower performance (Grass, Mason, & McEachern, 1958).

Research results on the correlates of role clarity have been mixed (see Van Sell et al., 1981, for a literature review). Laboratory studies support a direct relationship between role clarity and satisfaction, but some correlational studies show mixed support. Nonetheless, Van Sell et al. (1981) concluded that decreased role clarity appeared to result in lower satisfaction and productivity. Fisher and Gitelson (1983) in their meta-analysis found significant and positive relationships between role clarity and commitment and satisfaction with co-workers. In a subsequent meta-analysis by Jackson and Schuler (1985), a number of studies suggested that decreases in role clarity resulted in lower job satisfaction and performance. The following hypotheses are derived from the above discussion:

- Hypothesis 4a: An increase in role clarity results in an increase in job satisfaction.
 Hypothesis 4b: An increase in role clarity results in an increase in job performance.
 Hypothesis 4c: An increase in role clarity results in an increase in organizational commitment.

The relative importance of role conflict versus role clarity has also been studied. House and Rizzo (1972) found that role clarity was a better predictor of certain job outcomes than role conflict. Rizzo et al. (1970) found that role clarity was more strongly related to satisfaction than is role conflict. Fisher and Gitelson (1983) found that role clarity was more strongly related to commitment than is role conflict. Role clarity is also predicted to be an antecedent to role conflict because conflict is more likely to be an outcome of lack of role clarity.

- Hypothesis 4d: An increase in role clarity results in decreased role conflict.

Job Satisfaction-Organizational Commitment

One final relationship examined in this study is the job satisfaction-organizational commitment link. Porter, Steers, Mowday, and Boulian (1974) suggested that attitudes, such as satisfaction and commitment, are outcomes of the process whereby individuals compare levels of expectations about the organization with perceived realities once inside the organization. Job satisfaction tends to be associated with specific aspects of work and is transitory in nature. Organizational commitment is a global attitude and is more stable in nature. Marsh and Mannari (1977) found that job satisfaction preceded organizational commitment. Early research by Bluedorn (1982) supported this causal sequencing. However, he and his colleagues (Dougherty, Bluedorn, & Koen, 1985) subsequently found that job satisfaction and commitment were exogenous variables with independent influence on the intent to leave the organization. Given the conflicting nature of these findings, the relationship between job satisfaction and organization commitment is also examined. The following hypothesis is based on the original theoretical explanation:

- Hypothesis 5: An increase in job satisfaction will result in an increase in organizational commitment.

Methodology

Sample

The data gathered for this study were a result of a longitudinal study involving college graduates who had accepted their first job after graduation. Two questionnaires were administered eight months apart.

The first set of self-report questionnaires was mailed to all seniors (n=1020) graduating in August at a large southwestern university. This mailing was sent two weeks prior to graduation and consisted of a questionnaire, cover letter, and a stamped, pre-addressed return envelope. Those students who had already accepted an offer for full-time employment after graduation were asked to complete the questionnaire. A total of 253 useable questionnaires were returned (24.8% response rate). It was anticipated that the more academically successful students would be most likely to obtain employment offers prior to graduation. This assumption was confirmed by the high grade point average of 3.09 on a 4.00 scale for the respondents.

Approximately eight months after graduation, the second questionnaire was mailed to 253 respondents who completed the first questionnaire. For the second phase, a total of 155 useable questionnaires were returned (61% response rate). The sample profile was

64.3% male, the average age was 23.5 years old, and 75.2% were single.

Measurements

Organizational commitment was measured with a four item scale developed by Hunt, Chonko, and Wood (1985). Job satisfaction was assessed using 20 items from the Job Description Index (JDI) developed by Smith, Kendall, and Hulin (1969). Since the study was concerned with general job satisfaction, the five sub-scales of the JDI were summated into a single measure of global satisfaction. Role conflict was measured using an eight item scale developed by Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman (1970). To reduce the possibility of response bias, half of the original items were reworded to represent positive or nonstressful aspects of the job. Each of the above scales used a five point Likert format (5=strongly agree to 1=strongly disagree). Role clarity was measured by a four item scale developed by Berkowitz (1980), using a five point rating scale (5=perfectly clear to 1=not clear at all). Job performance was measured by an eight item scale adapted from a scale developed by Behrman and Perreault (1982). Respondents compared their performance to others in the same firm having a similar length of employment (5=better than 90% to 1=below 30%). Due to each of the 155 respondents being employed in different organizations and the names of supervisors not known in advance, a self-report measure of performance was used because it was not feasible to obtain performance data from supervisors or company records. From their meta-analysis of performance determinants, Churchill et al. (1985) state that self-report performance measures do not demonstrate an upward bias.

After a review of the literature on job congruence, a 25 item scale was developed drawing primarily from the organization culture profile item set developed by O'Reilly, Chatman, and Caldwell (1991). Refer to Appendix A for a sample of the 5-point semantic differential scale used to measure job congruence. Respondents were asked on the initial, pre-employment study to "circle the number that best represents where you would fall between each of the 25 descriptors." This scale measured the personality characteristics of the respondent. In the post-employment questionnaire, respondents were given the same 25 items and asked to "circle the number of each that best describes the ideal employee for the job you currently hold." The second scale measured the situational requirements. Job congruence was determined by taking the difference in item scores between the pre- and post-employment questionnaires. The smaller the actual difference, the greater the perceived job congruence or person-situation fit.

Realism was measured by a 30-item scale created

primarily from the set of job characteristics developed by Dubinsky (1981). Refer to Appendix A which includes a sample of the realism items (five point rating scale from 1=very little to 5=very much). Respondents were asked on the initial pre-employment questionnaire to "indicate how much of the following job characteristics you believe the job you have accepted will contain and to circle the number that best describes your feelings." On the post-employment questionnaire, respondents were given the same 30 items and asked to "indicate how much of the following job characteristics you believe your current job contains and to circle the number that best describes your feelings." Realism was determined by taking the difference in item scores between the pre- and post-employment questionnaire. The smaller the actual difference, the greater the perceived realism.

Results and Discussion

Overall Model

A correlation matrix and reliabilities for all variables are presented in Table 1. The measurement scales appear robust. In a reliability test, Cronbach Alpha's ranged from .73 to .91 which are satisfactory for the purpose of this research (Nunnally, 1978). To test the proposed model, path analysis was used. Interpretation of path analysis can be affected by highly correlated variables above .80 (Hair et al., 1992). The low correlations indicate that multicollinearity should not be a concern.

The traditional approach to path analysis involves the use of a series of regression equations. An alternative approach to path analysis involves a special case of the LISREL program to test a path model (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1989). The basics of path analysis were incorporated into the original design of LISREL. While this application is just a portion of the program capabilities, researchers can use LISREL constructively, even if they do not wish to use all of the program's statistical features (Hennessy, 1985).

Path analysis using LISREL has several advantages over model fitting with multiple regressions. The use of standardized regression coefficient results from multiple regression makes the comparison of causal models difficult. In LISREL, the analysis of the correlation or covariance matrix is used to simultaneously compute unstandardized estimates that facilitate an assessment of the overall goodness of fit for a model and provide a basis for comparing the fit of different models (Hennessy, 1985). LISREL analysis evaluates the significance of the paths and indicates alternative structures that could empirically improve the fit among the variables in the hypothesized model.

Table 1
Correlation Matrix to be Analyzed
for Proposed Model

Variables	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	X1	X2
Y1 Role Clarity	1.000						
Y2 Role Conflict	-.435	1.000					
Y3 Job Performance	.205	.031	1.000				
Y4 Job Satis.	.393	-.561	.001	1.000			
Y5 Org Commitment	.248	-.459	-.084	.706	1.000		
X1 Congruence	.180	-.226	-.023	.410	.329	1.000	
X2 Realism	.319	-.429	-.101	.586	.429	.375	1.000
Number of items	3.00	7.00	8.00	20.00	4.00	24.00	28.00
Coefficient alpha	.75	.78	.89	.92	.87	.73	.91

A path analysis of the hypothesized model resulted in a chi-square statistic of 8.66 ($p = .372$) with 8 degrees of freedom and an adjusted goodness of fit index of .946. There appears to be a good fit of the model to the data. However, significance tests (t statistics) for the path coefficients in the hypothesized model, as described in Table 2, revealed that fit improvements could result from a more parsimonious representation of the proposed relationships. Following Duncan's method of model fitting or theory trimming, only paths with significant beta coefficients of .10 or greater were retained and the model was re-estimated (Hennessy, 1985).

The result of the subsequent path analysis indicated that reducing the model provides a more tenable representation of the structural relationship among the variables investigated in the study. While maintaining a strong goodness of fit index of .951, the trimmed model had a chi square value of 9.57 ($p = .479$) with 10 degrees of freedom. The chi square to degrees of freedom ratio more closely approximates the ratio of 1.0 advanced by Joreskog and Sorbom (1989) as desirable when assessing model tenability. Figure 2 represents a path diagram that graphically reflect the results of the path analyses. To help with interpretation, only the significant path coefficients at $\alpha = .05$ are reflected in the model.

Results

As hypothesized, high levels of realism (X2) resulted in reduced role conflict (Y2) ($t = -4.459$, $p = .001$) and increased role clarity (Y1) ($t = 4.150$, $p = .001$).

Hypotheses 1a and 1b were supported. The realism that these employees experienced could have been the result of having received information about the job and organization prior to entry. Or, the respondents may possess the ability to adapt to changing circumstances. In any event, these employees have a perspective about the job that enables them to adjust to its demands and balance the various roles they must perform.

A typical role conflict for employees is that between job and family. If new employees can make adjustments at home to the new job and can anticipate how they will deal on the job with family problems or be able to make prior arrangements for special circumstances on the job, they are likely to experience less role conflict. Similarly, these respondents indicated that they experienced increased role clarity. Consistent with what we predicted, employees who expressed a high degree of realism felt that their roles were clearly defined, they understood how job expectations were to be achieved, and they knew what the consequences of their performance would be.

Hypotheses 1c dealt with the direct impact of realism (X2) on job satisfaction (Y4). High levels of realism resulted in increased job satisfaction ($t = 3.064$, $p = .01$). Individuals who had a realistic picture of the organization may have been more satisfied because they did not experience the stress that is associated with cognitive dissonance caused by an unrealistic picture.

Hypotheses 2a and 2b addressed the influence of congruence (X1) on satisfaction (Y4) and commitment (Y5), respectively. The results indicate that high levels of job congruence had a direct, positive influence on job satisfaction ($t = 3.064$, $p = .01$). When individuals feel a sense of "fit" with the organization, they are more likely to adjust to the work environment in a positive way. However, a direct, positive influence of congruence on organizational commitment was not supported.

Table 2
Results for Research Model

Path From	Hypoth. To	Std. Path Dir.	Full Model		Trimmed Model	
			Std. Path Coef	t-value	Coef	t-value
1a Realism	RCF(Y2)	-	-.323	-4.459a	-.323	-4.459a
1b (X2)	RCL(Y1)	+	.319	4.150a	.319	4.150a
1c	JS(Y4)	+	.343	4.998a	.343	4.998a
2a Congruence	JS(Y4)	+	.190	3.064b	.190	3.064b
2b (X1)	JC(Y5)	+	.048	.779		
3a Role	JS(Y4)	-	-.326	-4.802a	-.326	-4.802a
Conflict (Y2)	JP(Y3)	-	.148	1.697	.148	1.697
4a Role	JS(Y4)	+	.110	1.692	.110	1.692
4b Clarity	JP(Y3)	+	.295	3.085b	.269	3.085b
4c (Y1)	JC(Y5)	+	.036	-.579		
4d	RCF(Y2)	-	-.332	-4.580a	-.332	-4.580a
5a Job Satis.(Y4)	JC(Y5)	+	.699	10.439a	.704	12.226a

a p=.001 RCL(Y1) = Role Clarity
b p=.01 RCF(Y2) = Role Conflict
JP(Y3) = Job Performance
JS(Y4) = Job Satisfaction
JC(Y5) = Job Commitment

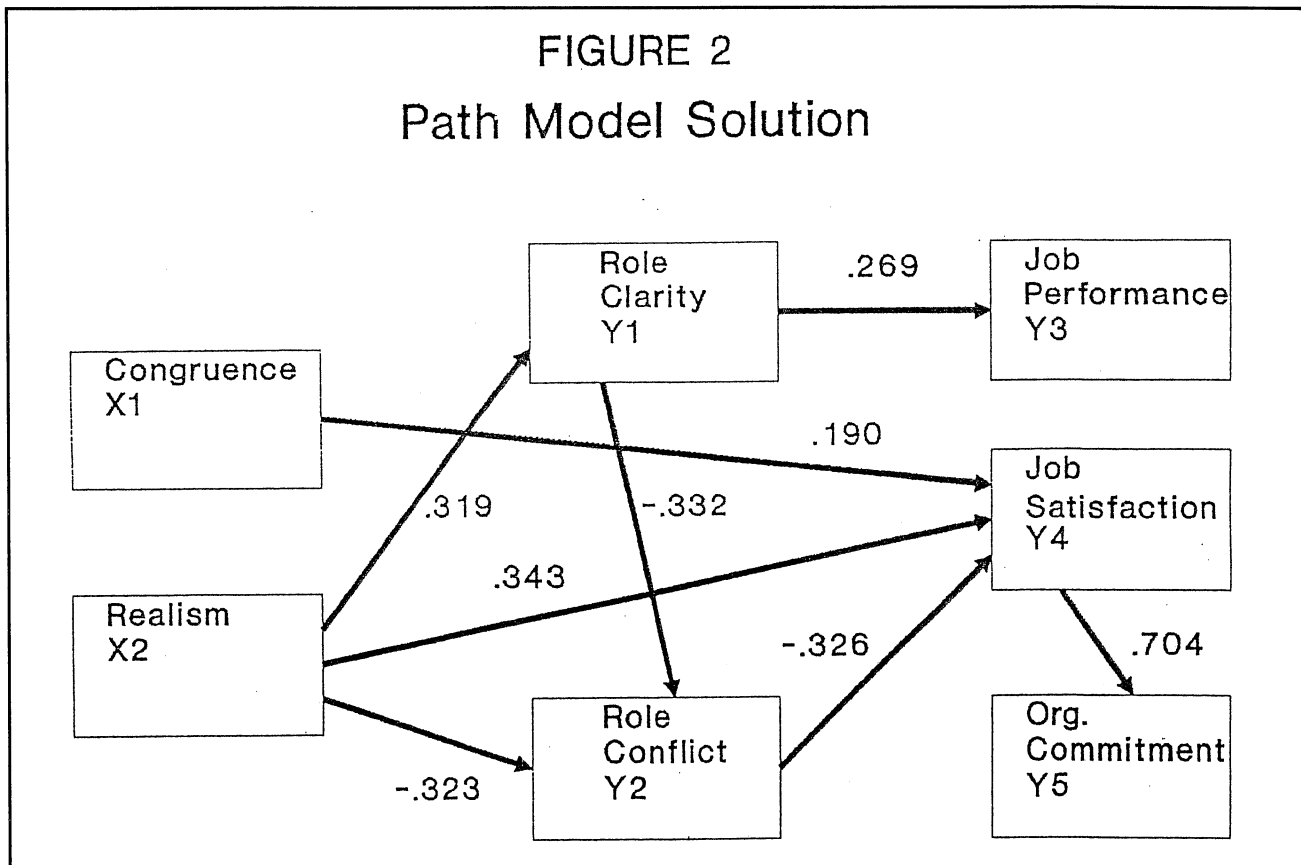
Role conflict (Y2) was hypothesized to have a negative influence on both job satisfaction (Y4) and job performance (Y3) (hypotheses 3a and 3b). The negative influence on job satisfaction was supported ($t = -4.082$, $p = .001$). Employees who characterize their jobs as presenting conflicting demands may be experiencing frustrations that result in dissatisfaction. A direct, negative influence on job performance, however, was not supported. Conflict itself does not necessarily lead to reduced ability to adequately perform one's job. This might be explained by the fact that employees have coping mechanisms or decision rules about how to proceed in conflict situations.

Role clarity (Y1), the focus of numerous studies involving job outcome variables, was hypothesized to positively influence job satisfaction (Y4), job performance (Y3), and organizational commitment (Y5) (hypotheses 4a, 4b, and 4c, respectively). Increased role clarity did result in increased job performance ($t =$

3.085 , $p = .01$), but role clarity did not influence job satisfaction or organizational commitment. We interpreted these findings as follows. Inconsistencies in job expectations, ambiguity on how to fulfill these expectations, and uncertainty about what will happen if expectations are not met affected whether individuals could perform their jobs. The lack of support for the role clarity/job satisfaction relationship may be due to the generalized job satisfaction measure that we used. Although the literature supports a positive relationship between role clarity and job satisfaction (Jackson & Schuler, 1985), Van Sell et al. (1981) suggests that generalized job satisfaction scales may not sufficiently discriminate between specific aspects of job satisfaction (e.g., satisfaction with work, pay, co-workers, supervision, and promotions). Future causal modeling research should explore a disaggregated job satisfaction measure.

Hypothesis 4d examined the influence that role clarity (Y1) has on role conflict (Y2). If an individual has a

FIGURE 2
Path Model Solution



clear picture of job expectations and how to achieve them, he or she should experience less role conflict because the individual could adjust the requirements of other roles. This relationship was supported ($t = -4.580$, $p = .001$).

Finally, hypothesis 5a suggests that job satisfaction (Y4) has a positive effect on organizational commitment (Y5). The data supported this hypothesis ($t = 12.226$, $p = .001$). High levels of job satisfaction resulted in higher levels of organizational commitment. The strong support was not unexpected due to the strong body of literature addressing this specific relationship (Bluedorn, 1982; Marsh & Mannari, 1977).

Conclusions

The primary purpose of this study was to explore a number of antecedents and consequences of role perceptions. Employee socialization (realism and congruence) was hypothesized to influence role perceptions (clarity and conflict). Role perceptions, in turn, were hypothesized to affect job outcomes (job satisfaction, job commitment, and job performance). We have found support for a trimmed model in the current research. Our findings confirm previous bivariate research on the following relationships: role clarity-job

performance (Jackson & Schuler, 1985), job satisfaction-job commitment (Bluedorn, 1982; Marsh & Mannari, 1977), conflict-job satisfaction (cf. Bagozzi, 1978), realism-role conflict/role clarity (Dubinsky et al., 1986), role clarity-job performance (Grass et al., 1958), and congruence-job satisfaction (Lofquist & Dawis, 1969). On the other hand, the findings of the present study did not support the following relationships: congruence-role ambiguity (Jackson & Schuler, 1985), congruence-commitment (O'Reilly et al., 1991), conflict-performance (Bagozzi, 1978; Haas, 1964), role clarity-commitment/satisfaction (Fisher & Gitelson, 1983), and role clarity-productivity (Van Sell et al., 1981).

The advantage of combining the above variables in a path analysis is to better understand patterns of causation among a set of variables (see Figure 2). Path analysis provides for a more complete picture of the relationship between the antecedents of role clarity and role conflict (realism and congruence) and consequences of role clarity and role conflict (job performance, job satisfaction, job commitment). For example, we have shown that job satisfaction is directly and indirectly affected by an antecedent of role conflict (realism). Specifically, the total effect of realism on job satisfaction is a sum of the direct effect of realism on job satisfaction and the indirect effect of realism on job satisfaction,

through role clarity and role conflict. This suggests that a firm will experience a direct and indirect improvement in job satisfaction by providing a realistic picture of the organization to employees prior to entry. Previous research on the bivariate relationships mentioned in the preceding paragraph cannot provide this type of information. On the other hand, we did not find an indirect benefit of congruence (through role clarity or role conflict) on performance, satisfaction, or commitment. Our path analytic results only support a direct relationship between congruence and job satisfaction, similar to Lofquist and Dawis (1969).

We have also shown that organizational commitment is the result of a complex process involving perceptions of job satisfaction, congruence, realism, role clarity, and role conflict. Though the only direct impact on organizational commitment was from job satisfaction, any variable that influences job satisfaction will also indirectly influence organizational commitment (refer to Figure 2 for the indirect paths). Again, these findings shed new light about the effects of congruence, realism, role clarity, and role conflict on job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Some limitations to the present research include (1) the recursive nature of the model we have tested using path analysis. Only one-way causal flows are considered. Hence, this study did not examine the possible reciprocal nature of the job satisfaction-organizational commitment relationship; (2) the nature of the jobs that respondents held. We have no way of knowing whether respondents held supervisory or non-supervisory jobs. On the one hand, if tasks associated with supervisory jobs are relatively non-routine and uncertain, enhancing role clarity may be a useful endeavor. On the other hand, if tasks associated with non-supervisory jobs are relatively routine and certain, enhancing role clarity may increase job dissatisfaction by making it all too clear that the tasks do not require special skills; (3) the use of a diverse sample of employees. Respondents in the current study represented a variety of organizations and professions. This limited our ability (a) to collect measures of job performance other than self-report, and (b) to ascertain the nature of the relationships between role conflict-job performance, and between role clarity-job satisfaction. In the present study, these two relationships were not significant.

This study has provided useful information about the influence of socialization variables and job perceptions on three important organizational outcomes--job performance, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. Path analysis has allowed us to simultaneously explore the complex nature of these variables. As a result we have explained how congruence, realism, role clarity, and role conflict simultaneously impact, both directly and indirectly, job satisfaction, job performance, and

organizational commitment. What we have added to the existing literature are some new insights into the indirect effect these antecedent variables have on important organizational outcomes. We hope our efforts will encourage others to pursue this line of research. ☛

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Appendix A - Sample Measures for Realism and Congruence

Realism

1. The extent to which I will be left on my own to do my own work.
2. The opportunity I will have for independent thought and action.
3. The amount of variety I will have in my job.
4. Openness and honesty between my boss and me.
5. The amount of feedback I will obtain from my superior on my job performance.

Congruence

1. Prefer to work alone-----Prefer to work with others
2. Like to do paperwork-----Hate to do paperwork
3. Like complicated problems-----Like simple problems
4. Thrive under pressure-----Choke under pressure
5. Like familiar things-----Like new things

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