

Technical Report



WP 1974/42

WP42
1974
(42)



**INDIAN INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT
AHMEDABAD**

**INTER-ROLE EXPLORATION :
AN OD INTERVENTION**

by
Udai Pareek

August 1974

T R No.42

Indian Institute of Management
Ahmedabad

**INTER-ROLE EXPLORATION :
AN OD INTERVENTION**

by
Udai Pareek

August 1974

T R No.42

**Indian Institute of Management
Ahmedabad**

Role is the central concept in understanding the dynamics of an organisation. The concepts of role space (relationship amongst all the roles an individual occupies) and role set (relationship of the role with other significant roles in the organisation) are important in understanding role dynamics. Four stresses relating to the role space (self-role, distance, intrarole conflict, role growth stress, and inter-role conflict) and four stresses relating to the role set (role ambiguity, role overload, role-role distance, and role erosion) are stated as important role stresses. Functional strategies—confronting the stress to manage it - are distinguished from dysfunctional strategies—avoiding the stress. An approach to promote functional strategies in an organisation is described. The approach promotes mutuality, creativity, confrontation, and exploration. The following are involved in IRE: concept discussion, role set mapping, image sharing, role linkage, role expectation conflicts, role erosion, analysis of organisational climate and role negotiation.

Udai Pareek

Role is a central concept in the understanding of the organizational dynamics. It can be conceived as the inter-face between the person and the organization. In Organization Development this important interface region has not been adequately used. Three important OD interventions reported around the role are those by Dayal and Thomas (1968), Harrison (1971) and Sherwood and Glidewell (1973). The main focus of the Role Analysis Technique (Dayal and Thomas, 1968) is to help define a given role in the organization clearly by focussing on the discussion of the purpose of the role, its prescribed and discretionary components, and its linkages with other roles. This technique has been reported to be very useful for role clarification. Role Negotiation (Harrison, 1971) and Role Renegotiation (Sherwood and Glidewell, 1973) are more dynamic interventions, focussing on the help the various roles in an organization can give each other in increasing their effectiveness. All these three interventions skirt the problems of role conflict and role stress. They are, however, very useful for the purpose for which they have been used.

The intervention discussed in this paper is focussed on confronting the problems of role conflict and role stress, and evolving strategies of mutual help in coping with these problems amongst the various roles in an organization. It helps the various role occupants develop joint exploratory strategies.

Before discussing the intervention, it may be necessary to state the various concepts used in this connection. The concepts of role, role stress and the coping strategies for role stress are relevant for the intervention.

Organisational Roles

The concept of role is the key concept in understanding the integration of the individual with the organization. It is through role that the individual interacts with, and gets (or does not get) integrated with the organisation. Katz and Kahn (1966) give role the central place in the organization by defining human organizations as role systems.

Katz and Kahn use two terms: office and role. "Office is essentially relational concept, defining each position in terms of its relationships to others and to the system as a whole. Associated with each office is a set of activities or expected behaviours. These activities constitute the role to be performed, at least approximately, by any person who occupies that office" (p.173). Other authors also make a distinction between position or office, and role. Although Linton (1936), the first among the proposers of the concept of role, viewed the concepts of status and role in an integrated way, the word role has been used in two meanings. Sometime the term is used to denote the position a person holds in an organization - along with expectations from that position (e.g. the role of a teacher, a policeman, etc.) and sometime it is used to describe the expected behaviour or activities only (for example, disciplinarian role or evaluator role of a teacher, task and maintenance roles, etc.). Thomas and Biddle (1966) have discussed the various terms used in role theory. For the sake of convenience we shall use the word role for any position a person holds in a system (organization) as defined by the expectations various significant persons, including himself, have from that position. We shall use the term function to indicate a set of interrelated expectations from a role. Used in these meanings, while sales manager is a role, developing his salesforce and customer contact are his functions. These meanings are suggested in the beginning only for convenience and to avoid any confusion. These are certainly arbitrary.

Role is a central concept in the organisation. The individual and the organization come together through the role. As shown in Figure 1 the organization has its own structure and goals. Similarly, the individual has his personality and needs (motivation). These interact, and hopefully get integrated to some extent, in the role. Pareek (1974) has used role as a central concept in discussing work motivation.

Figure 1 about here

It is only through the role that the individual and the organization interact with each other. This is the overlapping region.

This concept is illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2 about here

Role space and role set

As suggested by Katz and Kahn (1966) an organization can be defined as a system of roles. However, role itself is a system. From the point of view of an individual, two role systems are important, the system of various roles the individual carries and performs, and the system of various roles of which his role is a part, and in which his role is defined by other significant roles. The first we shall call role space. The second is known in the literature as role set.

Each individual occupies and plays several roles. A person X is a son, a father, a salesman, a member of a club, a member of a voluntary organization and so on. All these roles make up his role space. In the centre of the role space is the self. As the concept of role is central to the concept of organizations, the concept of self is central to the concept of role. "The term 'self' refers to the interferences the person makes about the referent for 'I'. It is a cognitive structure and derives from past experience with other persons and with objects. We define the self as the experience of identity arising from a person's inter-behaving with things, body parts, and other persons" (Garbin and Allen, 1968, p.523). Various roles the person performs are around the self. These roles are at various distances from the self and from each other. These relationships define the role space. Role space, then, can be defined as the dynamic interrelationship both between the self and the various roles an individual occupies, and amongst these roles.

The distance between a role and the self will indicate the extent to which the role is integrated with the self. When we do not enjoy a particular role, or do not get involved in it, there is distance between the self and the role. Goffman (1961) calls it role-distance, and so does Ruddock (1969). "When a person is not fully absorbed in his role behaviour and allows it to be seen that this is so, we speak of

role-distance" (Ruddock, 1969, p.14). However, we shall use the word self-role distance to denote this. Similarly, there may be distance between one role and the other role a person occupies. For example, the role of club membership may be distant from the husband role, if the two roles conflict. This we shall call interrole distance or interrole conflict. Role space map of an individual can, then, be drawn by locating the self in the centre, and various roles he occupies at various distances from the self, and from each other. Figure 3 presents a diagrammatic model to prepare the role space map. The numbers 9 to 1 for the various circles represent distance from the self--9 denoting the least distance and 1 the most distance. The various roles may be located in the four quadrants, to indicate distance between them. For example, if roles A and B are both at a distance of 8 from the self, but have maximum distance from each other, they can be located in the circle marked 8, but one can be written in the upper part of the circle, and the other in the lower part. Each person can prepare a map of his role space by locating significant roles in the circular diagram suggested in Figure 3. Self-role and interrole distance are important part of personality. Some psychologists define personality as systems of action arising out of interplay of self and role (Ruddock 1969, Sarbin 1963).

Figure 3 about here

Some classification systems of roles have been proposed. Banton (1954) has proposed the concepts of basic, general and independent roles. Basic and general roles are related (e.g. husband is a basic role, and working woman's husband is a general role). The term role repertory is used to indicate a collection of such roles. Ruddock (1969) uses the term roletree to indicate a branching network concept. The trunk corresponds to the basic role, the main branches to the general roles, the secondary branches to special roles, and the leaves to the transient roles.

The individual's role in an organisation is defined by the expectations by significant roles in that organization, including the individual himself. The expectations from the role by the individual himself, are termed reflexive role expectations by Kahn and Quinn (1970) Katz and Kahn (1966) use the term focal person for the individual who occupies the role, and role senders for persons in the role set of the

individual. We shall use the term role occupant for the individual who occupies a particular role, and other roles for all other roles in the role set of the individual. The concept of role set was proposed by Merton who defined role set as the "compliment of role relationships which persons have by virtue of occupying a particular social status" (Merton, 1957, p.369) and has been widely used in the literature. Role set is the pattern of relationship between the role being considered and other roles.

The role set map for an individual's role can also be prepared on the same lines as suggested for preparing a role space map. In the map the role of the role occupant will be in the centre, and all other roles can be located in various points in the map. Using a circular model, the roles can be located in the circles marked 9 to 1 -- 9 indicating the nearest roles to the role occupant's role, and 1 indicating roles at the most distance from his role. We shall use the term role + role distance to indicate the distance between the role of the role occupant and other roles. Lower distance indicates higher role linkage which can be defined as the reverse of role-role distance. Role linkage is an important concept in role satisfaction and role conflict.

Role taking and role performance

The process of role taking in the organisation is the process of establishing identification by the individual with the organisation. There are two aspects of role taking. One aspect relates to the individual's self-concept and the way he responds to the various expectations of other roles from his own role. He may react very positively and with great satisfaction to the expectations, and fulfil these expectations to the best of his capability. Such a reactive approach will help the individual take the role effectively. In contrast, another individual may use the expectations he himself has from the role he occupies (what Kahn and Quinn call reflexive role expectations) and develop role behaviour in which his own expectations play a major role. This is a proactive approach to role performance. Some authors have contrasted these two approaches, calling the first as 'role taking', and the second as 'role making'. The main difference is made by the use of one's own expectations in defining the role and determining one's own role behaviour.

The other aspect of role taking is concerned with the identification of the self with the role. If the role is so different from the self, that the expectations conflict with the self-concept, it may

result in what we have called self-role distance. This aspect of role taking may be called role acceptance. Even when there is no evident self-role distance, the degree of role acceptance may be low or high. Sarbin and Allen (1968) have proposed seven levels of intensity of role taking, defining this in terms of how much the individual is able to get into the role. These range from casual roles to the emergence of a moribund person.

Katz and Kahn (1966) have proposed the concept of role episode to explain the process of role taking. Role taking involves both role-sending (by occupants of other roles) and role-receiving (by the role occupant). The role occupant and the other roles (role senders) constantly interact and the process of role sending and role receiving influence the role behaviour of the individual. The role senders have expectations on the basis of their perception of the role occupant's behaviour. The role occupant acts on the basis of his perception of the role being sent to him. However, his role behaviour influences the expectations of the role senders. Thus, role episode has a feedback loop. Katz and Kahn have elaborated this concept to include interaction between role senders and the role occupants, as well as interpersonal and personality factors. Their model appears in Figure 4.

Figure 4 about here

The Nature of Role Stress

In the role behaviour of an individual several variables are involved - the self, the other roles (role senders), the expectations by the other roles, expectation by the self, roles undertaken and performed by the individual. It is extremely difficult to imagine situations in which there is no conflict amongst these variables. The very nature of the role has built-in potential for conflict and stress. So conflict is a natural variable in role performance. Conflict and stress need not necessarily be negative in their effects on the individual and the organization. Some amount of stress is necessary for the effective working of an individual and the organization. It is not the presence or absence of stress that makes the individual or organization effective or ineffective, but it is the way in which this stress is managed which is a crucial factor for individual and organizational effectiveness.

The concept of stress has been popular in psychology. Several terms have been used which are synonymous with or similar in meaning as stress. There are four common terms used in the literature: stress, strain, conflict, and pressure. Lazarus (1966) has defined stress as any force directed at an object. Selye (1956) has referred to the source of such stress or damaging stimuli as stressors; and the reactions of the organisms as stress. Kahn and Quinn (1970) have proposed a response-inferred definition of stress as "an extreme or noxious stimulus which generally results in certain physiological change, behavioural change, perceptual cognitive change, affective change and in both overt and intrapsychic coping efforts". Role conflict has been defined in terms of conflicting expectations. The main characteristic of conflict is the incompatibility of some variables relating to the role of an individual, which may have some consequences for the individual's role performance. The word strain has been used in the literature to denote the effect of stress on the individual. The word pressure has also been used. Buck (1972) defines job pressure as "the resultant psychological state of the individual when he perceives that (1) conflicting forces and incompatibility commitments are being made upon him in connection with his work; (2) at least one of the forces of demands is an induced one; and (3) the forces are recurrent or stable over time." Several studies have shown that role stress or pressure is very bad for the mental and physical health. The physical health hazards of the role have been discussed by Sales (1969).

Although distinction is made amongst related concepts like conflict, stress, strain, and pressure, it may be useful to use these interchangeably in order to understand the incompatibility of certain role-related variables, their effects on the individual's behaviour, and the efforts he makes in dealing with them. In this paper we are not, therefore, making distinction amongst these related terms.

Several systems of classifications have been used to discuss role conflict and stress. Kahn and Quinn (1970) have classified role stress under three main headings: expectation generated stress, in which they include role ambiguity and role conflict; expectation-resource discrepancies, in which they include role overload, responsibility-authority dilemma, and inadequate technical information; and role and personality. We find it more functional to use the two main role constellations as areas of conflict and stress.

Role-space conflicts and stress

The main fields in which role is significant to the individual are the role space and the role set. Role space (this dynamic relationship amongst various roles the individual occupies and his self) may involve the individual's role, the role of the individual's question, and other roles he occupies. Any conflicts within this field are referred to as role-space conflicts. These conflicts may be the following:

1. Self-role distance: We have already discussed this as the conflict between the self-concept and the expectations from the role as perceived by the role occupant. If a person occupies a role which he may subsequently find is conflicting with his self-concept, he feels the stress. For example, a usually introvert person, who is fond of studying and writing, may have self-role distance if he accepts the role of salesman in an organization, and comes to realise that the expectations from the role would include his meeting people and being social. Such conflicts are fairly common, although these may not be so severe.

2. Intra-role conflict: Since the individual learns to develop expectations as a result of his socialisation and identification with significant others, it is quite likely that he sees some incompatibility between two expectations (functions) from his own role. For example, a professor may see incompatibility between the expectations of teaching students and that of doing research. These inherently may not be conflicting, but the individual may perceive these as incompatible.

3. Role growth stress: As the individual grows physically, he also grows in the role he occupies in an organization. With the advancement of the individual, his role changes, and with this change in role, the need for his taking his new role become crucial. This is the problem of role growth. This becomes an acute problem especially when an individual has occupied a role for a long time, and he enters another role in which he may feel less secure. However, the demand of the new role is for the individual to outgrow his previous role and occupy the new role effectively. This produces some stress in the individual. In organizations that are fast expanding, and which do not have systematic strategy of manpower development, managers are likely to experience this stress when promoted to higher positions.

4. Inter-role conflict: The individual occupies more than one role. There may be conflicts between two roles he occupies. For example, an executive often faces the conflict between his organizational role as

an executive and his familial role as the husband and the father. The demands from his wife and children to share his time may be incompatible with the organizational demands on him for spending a lot of time on organizational problems. Such inter-role conflicts are quite frequent in modern society when the individual is increasingly occupying multiple roles in various organizations and groups.

Role set conflicts

The other field which is important for the individual's role is his role set which consists of important persons who have different expectations from the role he occupies. The conflicts which arise as a result of incompatibility amongst these expectations, by significant other roles and by the individual himself, are referred to as role set conflicts. These conflicts are as follows:

1. Role ambiguity: When the individual is not clear about the various expectations people have from his role, he faces the conflict which may be called role ambiguity. Role ambiguity may be due to lack of information available to the role occupant, or due to lack of understanding of the cues available to him. Kahn and Guinn (1970) have suggested that role ambiguity may be in relation to the activities, responsibilities, personal style and norms. They have suggested three loci of role ambiguity: the expectations role senders hold for the role occupant, the expectations sent by the role sender to the role occupant, and the expectations the role occupant receives and interprets in the light of prior information and experience. They have suggested that four different kinds of roles are likely to experience ambiguity: roles new to the organization, roles in expanding or contracting organizations, role in organizations exposed to frequent changes in demand, and roles on process. Role ambiguity may result in various other conflicts.

2. Role overload: When the role occupant feels that there are too many expectations from the significant roles in his role set, he experiences role overload. This term has been popularised by Kahn et al (1964). They measured this stress by asking questions about the feelings of people whether they could possibly finish work given to them during a modified work day and they whether they felt that the amount of work they did might interfere with how well it was done. Most of the executive role occupants experience role overload. Kahn and Quinn (1970) have suggested some conditions under which role overload is likely to occur.

According to them role overload is likely to occur more in the absence of mechanism of role integration, in the absence of power of role occupants, in the large variations in the expected output and when delegation or assistants cannot procure more time.

3. Role-role distance: In a role set, the role occupant may feel that certain roles are psychologically near to him, while some other roles are at a distance. The main criterion of role-role distance is frequency and ease of interaction. When linkages are strong, the role-role distance will be low. In the absence of strong linkages, the role-role distance may be high. The role-role distance can, therefore, be measured in terms of existing and desired linkages. The gap between the desired and the existing linkages will indicate the amount of distance between the two roles.

4. Role erosion: A role occupant may feel that some functions which he would like to perform are being performed by some other role. The stress felt may be called role erosion. Role erosion is the subjective feeling of an individual that some important role expectations he has from his role are not shared by other roles in his role set. Role erosion is likely to be experienced in an organization which is redefining its role and creating new roles. In several organizations, which were redefining their structure, the stress of role erosion was inevitably felt. In one organization, one role was abolished and two roles were created to cater to the executive and planning needs. This led to a great stress in the role occupants of both roles who experienced role erosion, and felt that their roles had become less important compared to the older role.

Some factors associated with role stress have been identified in some research studies. Snock (1966) has reported that the larger the role set of a role occupant, the greater the strain he is likely to experience. Age (younger), experience (less) and size (medium) of the department have been found to be significantly associated with role strain (Richardson, 1973). Lack of empathy and creation of new roles are two important factors contributing to role stress. However, role variety, i.e. number of completely dissimilar occupational categories in the organization, has been found to be associated with the ability to cope with uncertainty (Tyler, 1973). Role variety (Tyler has developed a coefficient of specialisation to measure it) and role specificity (Danet, 1972) have been found to be two important factors preventing role stress. But the fact remains that the various forms of role stress, as discussed in this paper, create problems for

/not the individual and the organization. However, as we have already said, it is the presence of these stresses that may affect the working of the organization, but it is the way in which these stresses are managed. The coping behaviour of the individual and the organization is important in this respect.

Coping with Role Stress

When an individual and an organization experience role stress, they adopt some ways of coping with the stress. Individuals and the organizations cannot remain in a continuous state of tension. Even if a deliberate and conscious strategy is not taken to deal with the stress, some strategy is adopted; for example this strategy may be to leave the conflict and stress to take care of themselves. Even this is a strategy, although the individual or the organization may not be aware of this. It is useful for the individuals and the organizations to examine what strategy they are using to cope with the stress. If no coping strategy is adopted, it may lead to lack of effectiveness. Hall (1972) has reported that coping (as opposed to noncoping) itself is related to satisfaction. He found coping itself being important rather than a particular coping strategy.

Kahn and Quinn (1970) have suggested distinction in coping strategies in terms of whether the coping is directed at "the environmental stressors" or "the resultant affect it elicits in the role occupant". For the former, they have cited Jahoda (1958) who has distinguished between "passive" adaptation (changes in the self or one's behaviour), and "environmental mastery" (active attempts to change the environment. As for the latter, i.e. coping with the resultant effect of stress, like anger, dissatisfaction, guilt, tension etc., the strategies could take the form of ego-defensive mechanisms (rationalisation, projection, displacement etc.), or artistic redefinition of the situation (understanding the power of the other role, denying responsibility, minimising the seriousness of the situation etc.).

There are various ways of looking at coping strategies. However, we can broadly classify these into two kinds. Some strategies are used to avoid the stress, in the hope that time will take care of the stress. These may be called avoidance strategies. Such a strategy does not contribute to problem solving and, therefore, is dysfunctional. Most of avoidance strategies would use defensive behaviour and reduce tension without resolving the problem. Using the term suggested by Golembiewski (1972), these may also be called as degenerating strategies, since they

lead to lack of effectiveness both on the part of the individual and the organization. The other set of strategies use confrontation as the main approach. Instead of avoiding problems, these strategies help the individual and the organization face the problem and work out a solution for it. These strategies are functional, as they contribute to the solution of the problems. In Kolmbiewski's language, they may also be called regenerating strategies, since they help the individual and the organization become more functional and increase their self-renewing capacities. One basic difference between the two sets of strategies is that confrontation strategies imply the role occupant's belief that he, along with others, can influence the situation, while one use an avoidance strategy believes that he is not capable of influencing the situation. Garmill and Heisler (1972) have shown that the greater the belief in one's ability to influence the environment, the lower is the reported job strain.

Based on this broad classification of strategies into two kinds, we can think of the two ways in which any role conflict or role stress is managed. Figure 5 summarises the two main ways of managing different conflicts discussed earlier.

Figure 5 about here

Role stress is certainly related to personality characteristics of the role occupant, and the properties of the group to which he belongs. Kahn and Quinn (1970) have summarised some of the findings in this regard. According to French (1968) stress is higher in low cohesive groups. French quotes a study by Kahn showing that the effect of role conflict on job-related tension occur almost entirely for people who are flexible. However, in the rigid people, those who had strong role conflict were found to cut off communication with associates. Introverts showed low trust under role stress.

Role space conflicts

1. Self-role distance: When the stress in the form of self-role distance is experienced, the individual may deal with the stress in two ways. In the extreme form, the individual may choose either his self-concept, and in turn reject the role, or he may choose his role, and

in turn reject his self. Many individuals who find a conflict between their self-concept and the role they occupy in an organization, may simply play that role in a routine way to earn their living. They take no interest in their role, and this is indicative of self-role distance. They have rejected the role. On the other hand, some other individuals may seriously occupy their roles and in due course of time, completely forget their self-concept and play that role effectively, but reject their self. One important personality characteristic that may influence the decision of the individual to reject the self or the role is inner or other directedness. Dunnain (1972) has reported that self-oriented individuals, deal with incompatibility by being consistent with their needs while other-directed individuals manage it by being consistent with prevailing socially induced forces. Both these approaches are dysfunctional. If an individual rejects the role he is likely to be ineffective in the organization. However, if he rejects the self, he is likely to lose his effectiveness as an individual and it is likely to be bad for his mental health.

A functional strategy of dealing with this stress is to attempt role integration. The individual may analyse the various aspects of the roles which are causing self-role distance and may begin to acquire skills if these may help him to bridge this gap, or carry his own self into the role by defining some aspects of the role according to his own skills. In other words, an attempt both to grow into the role and make the role grow to use the special capabilities of the person would result in role integration, where the individual gets the satisfaction of occupying a role which is nearer to his self-concept. Such an integration is not easy to achieve, but with systematic effort, it is also not very difficult to attain.

2. Intra-role conflict: Intra-role conflict is both a role-space and a role-set conflict. When the various expectations from the role one occupies conflict with one another, role stress may develop. One way to deal with this stress is to eliminate those expectations from the role which are likely to conflict with other expectations. This is the process of role shrinkage. Role shrinkage is the act of pruning the role in such a way that some expectations can be given up. Role shrinkage may help avoid the problem, but it is a dysfunctional approach since the advantage of a larger role is lost. Instead of role shrinkage, if role linkages are established with other roles, and the problem is solved by devising some new ways of achieving the conflicting expectations, the individual can experience both the process of growth as well as satisfaction. If, for example, a professor who is experiencing conflict between three expectations from his role, that of teaching students, doing research

and consulting with organisations, may find that the conflict is basically because he does not have enough skills for doing research. Usually because of lack of relative skills, he may take recourse to role shrinkage. However, one way to deal with this problem is to develop the role linkages with other colleagues who are good in research, and work out an arrangement whereby research is not neglected. A better way of resolving the problems may be to find ways of doing things in a more nontraditional and productive way.

3. Role growth stress: When individuals get into new roles as a result of their advancement in the organization, or as a result of taking over more challenging roles, there may be a feeling of apprehension because the role is new and may require skills which the role occupant may not have. In such a situation, a usual way is to continue to play the previous role about which the individual is sure, and which he has been doing successfully. In many cases this is the tragedy of the organizations that even after advancement people at the top continue to play the role of the lower level managers. A foreman, for example, in due course may become General Manager, and still he may continue to play the role of the foreman with consequent frustrations to the new foreman and to others who expect him to devote his time to more productive aspects. In one organization, after several self-search sessions, it became clear to many persons at the senior management level that their tendency to have close supervision was really a tendency to continue to play their old roles. This is especially so if the individual role requires more new skills which have to be developed. For example, planning roles and the role of scanning the environment require altogether new skills. In the absence of such skills, the usual tendency is to fall back on the old tried out roles. This is role fixation.

As it is necessary for an individual to grow out of his role as a boy into that of an adolescent, and out of adolescence into adulthood, similarly, it is important for people to grow out of their old roles into new ones and face up the challenge. A more functional way to resolve this conflict is that of role transition. Role transition is the process by which a previous role, however successful and satisfying it may have been, is given up to take a new and more developed role. The word role transition has been borrowed from Burr (1972). Burr has suggested that role transition is helped by various processes, including anticipatory socialization, role clarity, substitute gratification, and transition procedure. In order to make role transition more effective, it is necessary to have anticipatory socialization, i.e. preparation for the taking of the new role. This would also include delegation of responsibility and functions to people below one's own role, so that the

person can be free to experiment and he can take help in such experimentation from others. Such a process of role transition may be very useful.

4. Inter-role conflict: The individual may experience stress due to conflict between two roles he occupies, and which conflict in expectations. The usual approach to deal with this problem is either to partition the roles clearly, so that a person is a husband or father when he is at home, and an executive when he is in his office, or there may be role elimination i.e. accepting one role at the cost of the other role. In such a case, the individual takes recourse to rationalisation. For example, an executive who neglects his family at home and who in this process eliminates his role of father and of husband, rationalises the process by thinking that he makes a unique contribution to the company and, therefore, can afford to neglect his family, or he earns enough for his family who should pay the price of losing him as a husband and as a father. Such rationalizations are part of the process role elimination. Hall (1972) has used the words partitioning and eliminating in the sixteen specific behavioural strategies he has identified in dealing with role conflicts. He suggests that these strategies are dysfunctional because they only avoid the problem, and do not help individuals confront and resolve the issues.

A more functional approach to the problem is role negotiation. Role negotiation has been developed as a technique of dealing with various problems of role conflict by Harrison (1971). The process of role negotiation is the process of establishing mutuality of roles and getting necessary help to play the roles more effectively, and giving help in turn to the other role. For example, an executive who is not able to find time for his family, may sit down and negotiate with his wife and children on how best he can spend time meaningfully within the given constraints. One executive in the largest nationalised bank in India solved the problem by discussing with his family and working out an arrangement whereby he would give entire Sundays to his family and would not normally accept invitations to dine out unless both the wife and husband were invited. This negotiation was highly satisfying because neither of roles had to be sacrificed and eliminated.

Role set conflict

In this area four conflicts have already been identified. The various coping strategies are discussed for each.

1. Role ambiguity: When the role is ambiguous because or

lack of communication, or because of gap between role sending and role receiving, the usual approach is to make the roles clear by putting various things on paper. This is role prescription. The various expectations are defined more clearly. Or, the individual may remove ambiguity by fitting into the role as described in some expectations. This is the process of role taking. A more functional approach may be to seek clarification from various sources and to define the role in the light of such clarifications. In contrast with role taking, a more creative way is to define the role according to ones own strength and to take some steps in making the role more challenging. This is the process of role making.

2. Role overload: To deal with the problem of role overload, i.e. a feeling of too many expectations from several sources, the role occupant usually prepares a list of all functions in terms of priorities. He gives top priority to those functions which are important. This kind of prioritization may help put things in order of importance. However, the problem may be that the functions with which a person is less familiar and comfortable may tend to be pushed lower down the priority list, and may be neglected. Those functions which a person is able to perform without any effort get top priority. Those which are in the lower level of priority always remain neglected, and in this sense, this approach may be dysfunctional. A more functional approach may be to redefine the role and see which aspects of the role may be delegated to other persons who may be helped to develop take on these functions. This may help the other individuals also to grow. This may be called role slimming. The role does not lose its vitality in the process of delegating some functions; in fact the vitality increases with the decrease in obesity.

3. Role-role distance: When there is tension between two roles in an organization, the distance between these roles is likely to be large. The linkage in such a case will be weak. The usual tendency in such a stress situation is for each role occupant to play the role most efficiently, and avoid interactions. The role occupant conflicts himself to his own role. This may be called role boundness.* He voluntarily agrees to be bound by the role. In several organizations we find individual executives and managers who are highly efficient in their own roles but who do not take corporate responsibility and whose linkages with other roles are very weak. The individual withdraws in

* The term role boundness was suggested and has been used by Professor Pulin Garg.

kind of isolation of efficiency. He gets satisfaction out of playing the individual role effectively and efficiently, but does not contribute as much as he could have done to the overall responsibility for the organization. This is likely to be dysfunctional as it does not help the individual play his role in the larger interest of the organization. A better method of approach is role negotiation. Harrison (1971) has described in detail the process of role negotiation which can be used for resolving such conflict.

4. Role erosion: When an individual feels that some important functions which he would prefer to perform are being performed by some other roles, there is a feeling of role erosion. The usual reaction in such a situation is to fight for rights of the role, and to insist on clarification of roles. The solution is to make structural clarifications. However, this is not likely to be functional and helpful, since the basic conflict continues. A better approach may be that of role enrichment. Like job enrichment, the concept role enrichment is the concept of vertical loading of the role. Cummings and Elsalimic (1970) have proposed the idea of role diversity. According to them role set diversity is measured in terms of the number of roles with which the role occupant maintains work relationships. They have reported that highly diversified role set provides the executive with varied source of stimulation, and, therefore, leads to managerial satisfaction. They found that this variable contributed more to satisfaction than the company size or sub unit size. The concept of role diversity is similar to the concept of role enrichment. Role enrichment can be done by analysing the role systematically, and helping the individual to see the various strengths in that role and the various challenges which the role contains but which might not have been apparent to the individual when he occupies it. Significant role members can help make the role more challenging and satisfying to the role occupant.

The various coping strategies outlined above make it clear that confrontation strategies are more functional and contribute to regenerating process. However, in order to use these strategies it would be necessary to work out systematic ways of implementing these strategies. A method evolved to do this and tested in several organisations in India is briefly mentioned in the next section.

How Inter-Role Exploration Works

Inter-Role Exploration (IRE) is used for strengthening various roles in an organization, through a joint effort on the part of these roles. IRE is used for role set conflicts. Occupants of all the roles in a role set participate in IRE.

The main focus of IRE is on developing confrontation and functional coping strategies for various kinds of role stress. There are various dimensions of inter-role interaction that are significant in this connection. IRE is not only a technique of stress coping, but is an approach, a philosophy of working in an organization. The following dimensions are particularly relevant for IRE.

(a) Mutuality versus exclusiveness: IRE attempts to build mutuality amongst the roles. Help giving and help receiving is possible only in a relationship of mutuality. Davidson and Kelley (1973) have reported social effect on stress reduction. Mutuality is a function of trust and perception of the importance and power of the other role as well as of one's own role. This is shown in figure 6. If a role occupant perceives his own role, or the other role to lack power, other kinds of relationship may develop between the two roles.

Figure 6 about here

(b) Creativity versus conformity: IRE attempts to stimulate persons in an organization to search new solutions for the problems they face in working together. The emphasis is on attempting alternative ways of solving a problem. IRE deemphasises the use of traditional methods of problem solving, if these methods have not proved to be efficacious. Creativity can be achieved by looking at the problem from different angles, and IRE stresses this. Creativity is related to internal locus of control. Gemmill and Heisler (1972) have reported that the greater the belief in one's ability to influence the environment, the lower is the reported job strain.

(c) Confrontation versus avoidance: The main philosophy underlying IRE is that problems can be solved if they are brought to the surface and a conscious attempt is made to search a solution. Instead of

avoiding the problems either by not looking at them or by working on non-issues in the organization, IRE attempts to help the various role occupants confront their problems they face in order to find a solution for them. According to this approach, confrontation of problems is necessary to reach a lasting solution.

(d) Exploration versus expectation of readymade solutions: IRE attempts to help people evolve a solution rather than expect any such solution from experts or from persons in the organization. The usual tendency is to look for a readymade solution which may relieve the tension, especially if it is suggested and prescribed by an authority figure like an expert or top management. The underlying philosophy of IRE is that such a solution may not be effective in solving a problem. Effective solutions can come about only through exploration rather than acceptance of an ideal solution. Exploration would mean a joint effort at understanding the problem and weighing the alternate solutions to that problem.

IRE, as an intervention, uses a structured approach with process orientation. Although the various steps involved in IRE are aimed at generating data using structured exercises, the work on these data involves group work, and the solutions can be achieved only through process-oriented work on the problems brought to surface by the data generated in the structured exercises. By using the structured exercises, the usual threat which process work produces is produced, but confrontation of the problems and issues of interrole relationships are brought up during the discussion in which process interventions by consultant become important.

The following steps are involved in a typical working of IRE Lab.:-

1. Concept session

The Lab usually starts with explanation of the basic concepts of the role and related concepts as outlined in the previous sections of this paper. It is useful to make these concepts clear so that common language is used by the participants. This is not a long theoretical session, but a short session to explain the basic concepts. These concepts are further explained as and when these are involved in the programme later.

2. Role set mapping

The participants are requested to prepare organizational roles set maps. The format used is given in Figure 7. The concept has already been explained earlier. Each participant prepares a map of his own role set. He plots the various other roles at estimated psychological distances from the role of the role occupant. The distance is estimated by the role occupant on the basis of both the frequency of interaction and his feeling close to the role.

Participants work in homogeneous groups for this purpose (e.g. marketing, production etc.). Role occupants in each group prepare three sets of images: self image of the group (e.g. marketing), image of the other group (e.g. production), and their guess about how the other group perceives them. The images are prepared using short adjectival expressions. Against each image are mentioned the indicators of that image. For example, in the sophisticated engineering company the self image of production people was that they were treated as less important. The indicators they wrote down included: not being invited to policy meetings, names of production managers linked together at the end of the mailing list of circulars.

4. Role linkage

Each participant prepares a picture about the role-role distance and existing linkage in his role set. The form used for this purpose is given in Figure 8. He writes all the significant other roles in the first column, and against each role indicates the existing linkage and the desired linkage with that role. Last column gives the role-role distance, or role seclusion. Seclusion scores more than 3 in last column are taken up for discussion. Then the role occupants sit together and discuss why this seclusion exists.

5. Role expectation conflicts

In order to get more data on conflicts due to role expectations and role overload, each participant fills out the form given in Figure 9. In the first column are listed all the functions of the role in terms of behaviour expected by any other role or the self. In the next column is noted the role senders for the expected function. In the next column, the degree of congruence or conflict is noted. This is done on a 10-point scale from +5 to -5; conflict amongst expectations being indicated by minus figures. Last column gives both role overload as well as self-role distance. All the functions which have less than 4 score in the last column are taken up for further work. Each person prepares the details of requirements for effective performance and source of help he would like to use for increasing his effectiveness as a part of role negotiation exercise.

Figure 9 about here

6. Role erosion

The exercises on role erosion are elaborate ones, and the forms used for getting data and working on these appear in Figure 10.

Figure 10 about here

As may be seen from Figure 10, two forms are filled out by the participants. Form B summarises the data from Form A, and gives data about role compatibility (and satisfaction), role erosion, and functional vacuum. When the functions for which a role occupant has high preference for performance, are being performed frequently by another role occupant, there is a feeling of role erosion. However, if these are not performed, or are performed less frequently, by another role, there is role compatibility and satisfaction of one kind. Similarly, if some functions for which a role occupant has low preference are performed by another role occupant more frequently,

there is role compatibility leading to satisfaction. But if these functions (not preferred by the role occupant) are also not performed by another role occupant, there may be either what may be termed as functional vacuum (no one attending to the functions), or these functions may not be very important in the organization. This concept is summarised in Figure 11.

Figure 11 about here

As is indicated in Form 3 in Figure 10, only the data from columns 3 and 4 are taken up for discussion and working. The data can be summarised for each other-role, using Figure 11, and the functions listed in the erosion and vacuum areas. During the discussion it may become clear how certain functions are misinterpreted, or how the importance of some other functions is not properly perceived.

7. Analysis of organisational climate

As the individual use some strategy to cope with the role stress, so do the organisations. An organisation both uses and promotes some coping strategies. It is useful to look at these strategies and talk about these. Participants first work in small groups (of 3 or 4) to discuss which strategies (outline above) is generally used and promoted by the organisation. The groups are encouraged to collect a number of incidents indicating the use of the strategies identified. They report in the larger group, and the group then discusses and reaches some consensus. Again small groups are formed to discuss ways and means that they can adopt at their own level to help develop more functional coping strategies at the organisational level, and they work out collaborative arrangement for this purpose.

8. Role negotiation

Role negotiation steps as outlined by Harrison (1971) are used to work out mutuality of relationship.

Figure 1

Role as the Integrating Point of the Organisation and the Individual

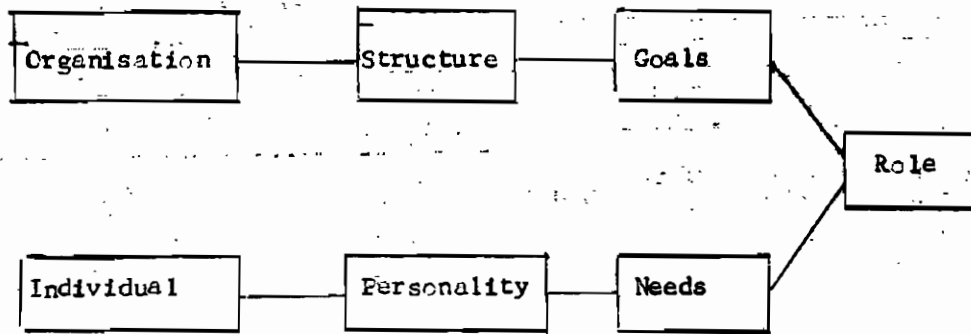


Figure 2

Role as the Interacting Region in the Space of the Organisation and the Individual

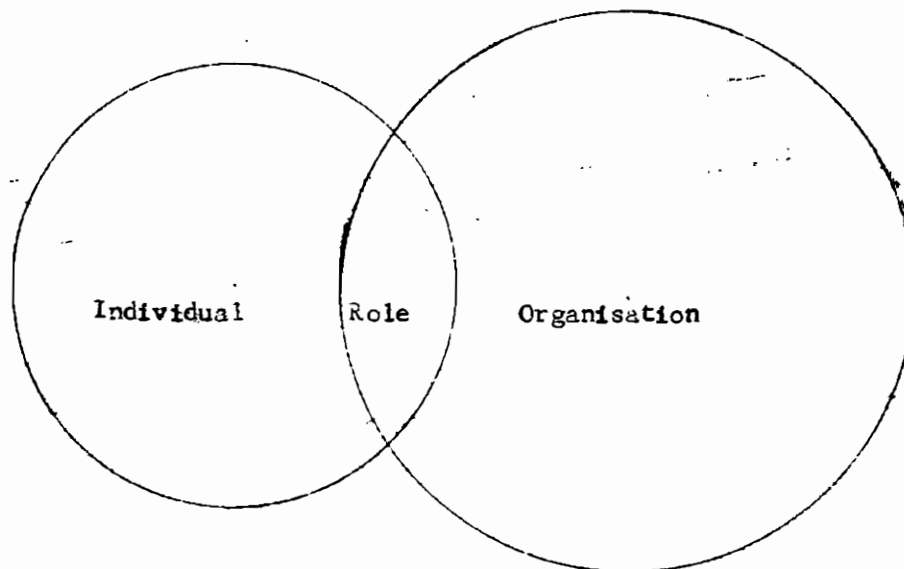


Figure 3 : A Model of the role episode

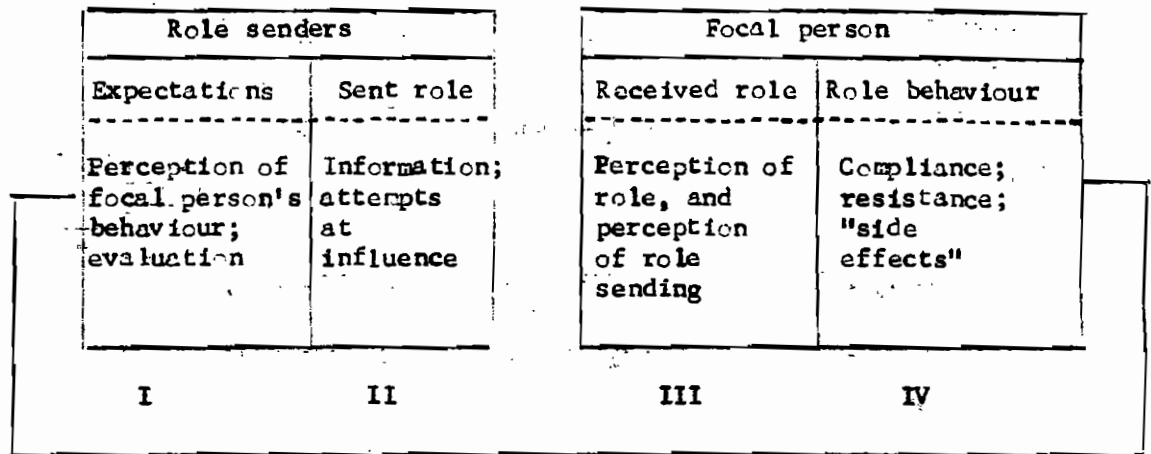


Figure 4: Role Space Map

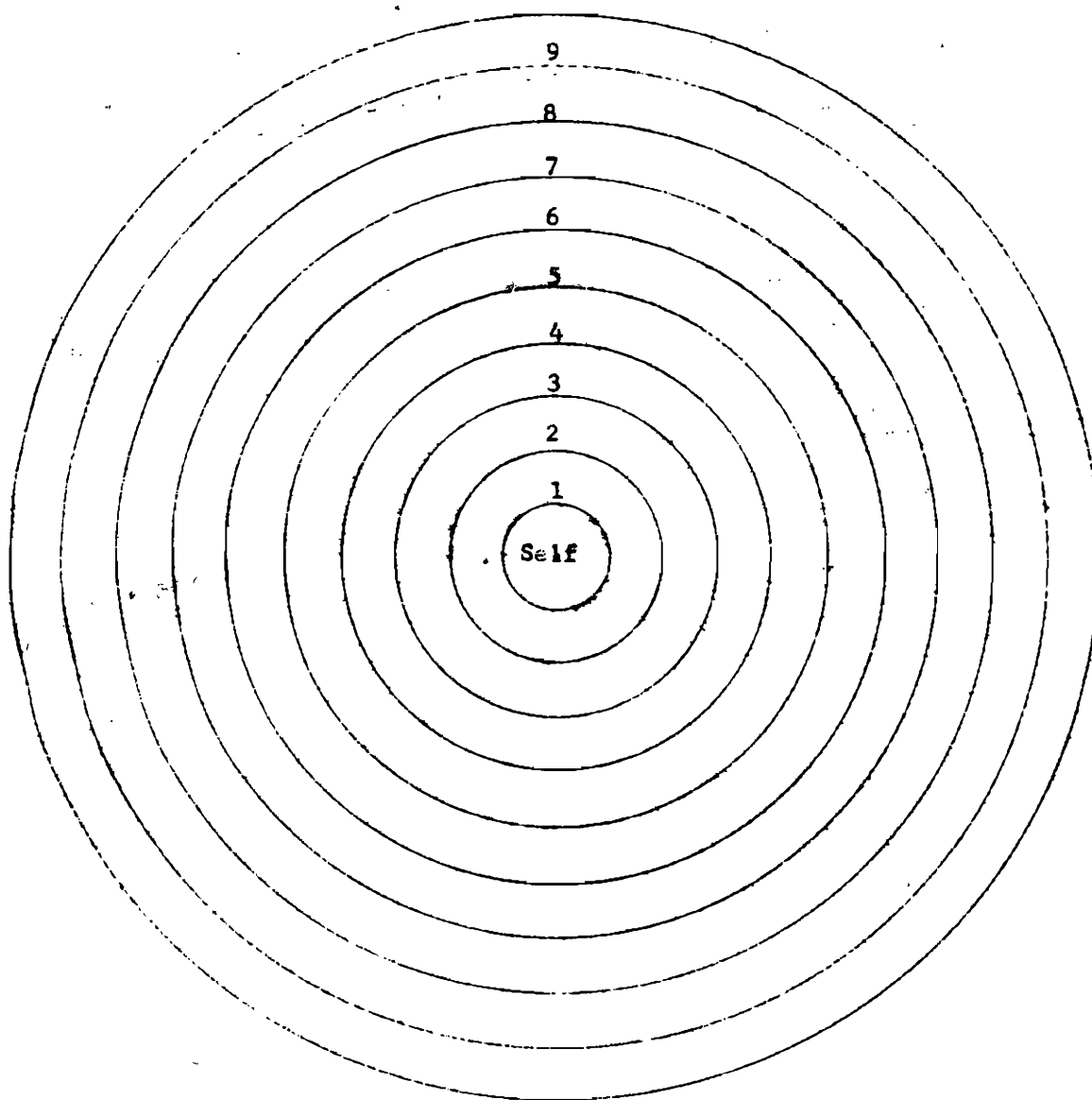


Figure 5

TWO TYPES OF COPING STRATEGIES

Role Conflict	Avoidance, Dysfunctional, Degenerating Strategies	Confrontation, Functional, Regenerating Strategies
A. <u>ROLE SPACE CONFLICTS</u>		
1. Self-role distance	Self/Role Rejection	Role Integration
2. Intra-role Conflict	Role Shrinkage	Role Linkage, Creativity
3. Role Growth Stress	Role Fixation	Role Transition
4. Inter-role Conflict	Role Elimination and Rationalisation	Role Negotiation
B. <u>ROLE SET CONFLICTS</u>		
1. Role Ambiguity	Role Prescription and Role Taking	Role Clarification and Role Making
2. Role Overload	Prioritytisation	Role Slimming
3. Role-Role Distance	Role Boundness (Efficient Isolation)	Role Negotiation
4. Role Erosion	Fight for Rights and Rules	Role Enrichment

Figure 6

Relationship Patterns under Different Conditions of Trust and Perceived Power

		Perceived Power			
		Neither	Only I	Only He	Both
Trust	Low	Isolation	Coersion	Withdrawal	Exclusiveness and/or rivalry
	High	Mutual sympathy	Nurturance	Dependency	Mutuality

Figure 7

Organisational Role Set Map

Your Role _____ Name _____

In the centre of the figure given on this sheet, write your own role in your organisation. Write other roles with which you interact. This sheet will represent your role set. Place the other roles at a distance you think they stand from your role, and from each other. Use a sector in the diagram (A, B, C etc.) to indicate the department. You can use as many sector spaces as you need. You can sub-divide the sector spaces to include more departments, if necessary.

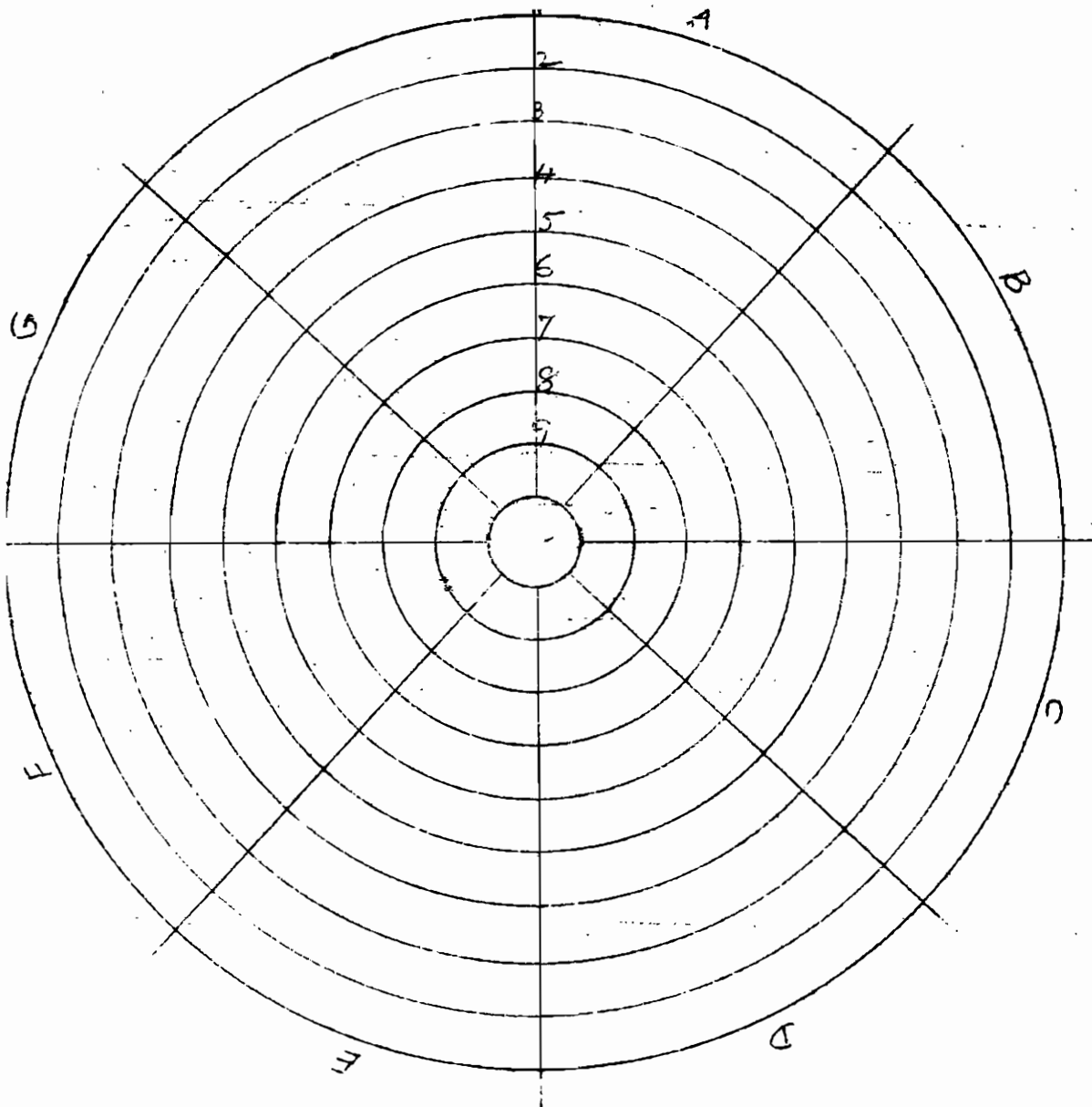


Figure 8
Role Linkage

Role _____ Name _____

Number of roles in Role-set	Linkage linkage (9-point scale)	Linkage linkage (9-point scale)	Material Distance (Seclusion) (Column 3 minus 2)

Figure 9

ROLE EXPECTATION CONFLICT AND ROLE OVERLOAD

Your role _____ Name _____

Expected Behaviour	Expected by (mention other role or self)	Degree of congruence or conflict (+5 to -5)	Degree of comfort with which you can perform it (5-point scale)

Figure 10

ROLE EROSION EXERCISE

- Step 1 On Form A list all the functions you perform and you would like to perform in your role. List them in the form verbs (e.g. to coordinate.....)
- Step 2 Go through the list and rank in column 2, for each function, your preference for performing that function on a 5-point scale: 1 would mean you have a very high preference; 5 would mean you have a very low preference.
- Step 3 Go through the list again, and indicate in column 3 and 4 for each function, on a 5-point scale, whether this function is performed by any other role, and how frequently. 1 would mean that no other role performs this function, or performs very infrequently; 5 would mean that some other role performs this function very frequently. Write in column 3 the names of the other-roles against each function and give the rating of performance (1 to 5) in column 4.
- Step 4 Fill out column 5 by subtracting figures in column 2 from those in column 4 (column 4 minus column 2)
- Step 5 Complete Form B by writing all the other roles from your role-set in column 1, and completing columns 2, 3 and 4 from column 5 of sheet A for each other-role listed in column 1.

Form A

Your Role _____		Name _____		
1	2	3	4	5
Functions	Preference ranking	Other role performing the function	Frequency rating of performance	Column 4 <u>minus</u> column 2
1				
2				
.				
.				
.				
n				

Cont'd

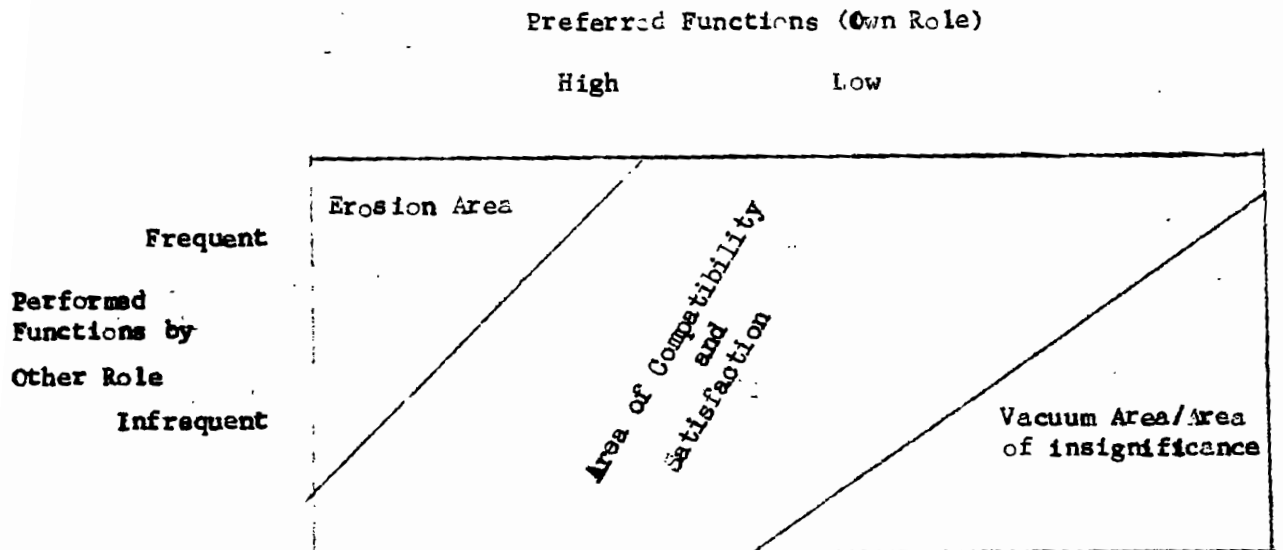
Form B

Your Role _____ Name _____

1	2	3	4
Other role	Frequency of Os and Is (Satisfaction and Compatibility)	Frequency of .2, .3, .4 (Vacuum and unimportant functions)	Frequency of +2, +3, +4 (Erosion)
1			
2			
.			
.			
n			

Figure 11

Role compatibility, Role Erosion, and Functional Vacuum as a Function of Preference for Functions and the Frequency of their Performance by Other-Roles



REFERENCES

- Buck, V.E. Working under pressure. London: Staples Press, 1972
- Burr, Wesley E. Role transitions: A reformulation of theory. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 1972, 34(3), 407-416
- Child, John and Elits, Tony. Predictions of variation in managerial roles. Human Relations, 1973, 26(2), 227-250.
- Cummings, Larry, and Elsalhi, Aly, I. The impact of role diversity, job level, and organizational size on managerial satisfaction. Administrative Science Quarterly, 1970, 15(1), 1-11.
- Danet, E. and Gurevitch. Presentation of self in appeals to bureaucracy. American Journal of Sociology, 1972, 77(6), 1165-1190.
- Davidson, Park O. and Kelley, William R. Social facilitation and coping with stress. British Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 1973, 12(2), 130-136
- Dayal, Ishwar and Thomas, John M. Operation KPE: Developing a new organization. Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 1968, 4(4), 473-506
- Dunkin, Michael, J. The nature and resolution of role conflicts among male primary school teachers. Sociology of Education, 1972, 45(2), 167-185.
- French, J.R.P. Quantification of organizational stress: In Managing organisational stress. Princeton, N.J.: Educational Testing Service, 1968, pp.5-41.
- Gemmill, Gary R. and Heisler, W.J. Fatalism as a factor in managerial job satisfaction, job strain, and mobility. Personnel Psychology, 1972, 25, 241-250.
- Goffman, E. Encounters. New York: Anchor Books, 1961.
- Hall, D.T. A model of coping with role conflict: The role of college educated women. Administrative Science Quarterly, 1972, 17(4), 471-486.

Harrison, K. Role negotiation: A tough minded approach to team development. In W.W. Burke & F.A. Hornstein, (Eds). The social technology of organization development. Washington, D.C., N.T.L. Learning Resources Corporation, 1971.

Jahoda, Marie. Current concepts in positive mental health. New York: Basic Books, 1958.

Kahn, Robert L. et al. Organisational stress: Studies in role conflict and ambiguity. New York: Wiley, 1964.

Kahn and Quinn. Responses to role stress and mediating variables, Role Stress: A framework for analysis. In McLean (Ed.) Mental Health and Work Organisations, Chicago: Rand McNally, 1970, pp.50-115.

Katz, D. and Kahn, R.L. The social psychology of organizations. New York: John Wiley, 1966.

Lazarus, Richard, S. Psychological Stress and the Coping Process New York: McGraw-Hills, 1966

Linton, R. The study of man. New York: Appleton Century, 1936.

Merton, R.K. Social Theory and Social Structure. Glencoe: Free Press, 1957.

Pareek, Uday. A conceptual model of work motivation, Indian Journal of Industrial Relations, 1974 (in press)

Richardson, Alan & Stanton, Meryl. Role Strain among sales-girls in a department store. Human Relations. 1973, 26(4) 517-536

Ruddock, Ralph. Roles and relationships. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969.

Saly, S.M. Organisational role as a risk factor in coronary disease, Administrative Science Quarterly, 1969, 14, 225-336

- Sarbin, T.R. and Allen, V.L. Role theory. In Lindzey, G and Aronson, E. (Eds.) The handbook of social psychology, Volume 2. Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1968, pp.428-567.
- Sherwood, John J. & Staggewell, John C. Planned renegotiation: A norm-setting OD intervention. In Bennis, Warren G. et al. Interpersonal dynamics. Homewood, Illinois: Dorsey Press, 1973, 3rd Edition.
- Snock, J.D. Role strain in diversified role sets. American Journal of Sociology, 1966, 71, 363-372
- Thomas, E.J. and Biddle, B.J. The nature and history of role theory, in Biddle, B.J. and Thomas, E.J. (Eds.) Role theory: Concepts and Research, New York: John Wiley, 1966, pp.1-20
- Tyler, William, B. Measuring Organisational Specialisation: The Concept of Role Variety. Administrative Science Quarterly, 1973, 18 (3), 383-392.