LIVING IN THE MIDDLE:
AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE ROLE OF NEW DEPARMENT CHAIRS

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ABSTRACT

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Making contributions as a new department chair is first dependent upon a chairs' sense of role certainty. What is interesting is that after two decades of conference presentations, journal articles, and books on the department chair role we still have few data-based studies for understanding how individuals perceive themselves and their professional challenges in the post of department chair (Gmelch, 1991). The present research suggests a way of understanding how new chairs might see the barriers to understanding their role more clearly than current theory and research has offered. The combination of a role's characteristics (role confidence), a newcomer's individual characteristics (personality needs), and the role's context (role support) are predicted to explain the degrees of difference among and between new department chairs' sense of role certainty.

A survey was used to collect data from individuals who were first-time department chairs and had been in the job between 0 and 3 years. Standard multiple regression was used to help explain how well role confidence, personality needs, and role support were able as a group to explain the variance of role certainty among new department chairs. Separate tests were run to discern the relative contribution of each scale on role certainty.

The data from the present study show that making contributions as a chair is bound up in finding (Ashford & Cummings, 1983, 1985; Miller & Jablin, 1991) and making sense (Gioia & Thomas, 1996) of the contextual knowledge (Dutton, Ashford, O'Neill, & Lawrence, 2001) surrounding the role of department chair. New chairs who fail to realize the knowledge that one

"lives" as a subordinate, an equal, and as a superior (Clegg & McAuley, 2005; Uyterhoeven, 1972) will miss leveraging change for the department (Huy, 2001) resulting in a lack of upward influence for the benefits of the colleagues they represent (Falbe & Yukl, 1992).

Based upon the findings of this study institutions ought to look strongly at the role of the dean, the personal attributes and career aspirations of chair candidates, and current organizational development offices and programs in providing support to newcomer department chairs. Additional recommendations include a consideration of how the more general literature on middle management research might be a benefit to higher education, and in particular how institutions may integrate the idea that management is a multifaceted phenomenon and not limited to specific disciplines, industries, or a small group of individuals.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Faculty members experience a period of both "discontinuity and flux" (Ashforth & Saks, 1995, p. 157), as well as "surprises and unexpected sacrifices" (Gmelch, 1991) when transitioning to a newly acquired department chair position. Pinder and Das (1979) suggest the period of time when newcomer employees work out this uncertainty has economic implications for an organization because the faster the development of the newcomer to the role, the more the contributions; the slower the development, the fewer the contributions. One implication of Pinder and Das' belief that contributions are indeed a function of role understanding is that the assumption does not account for contributions made outside the scope of the role. While it is true their premise denies that contributions somehow may not "count" beyond the written job description, what Pinder and Das, and later Pinder and Schroeder (1987), offer is a reasonable platform for presenting the link between contributions and job parameters. The thinking behind their argument begs further investigation into how one closes the time it takes for newcomers to make these contributions, and more specifically what may influence getting to that point. Role certainty is argued in this study as the gatekeeper of time to proficiency for new department chairs and becomes important to understand prior to talking about what contributions are to be made. The present study claims the combination of role confidence, personality needs, and role support are major elements helping to explain the role certainty of new chairpersons.

A quick time to proficiency by the new department chair is critical in today's resource strained environment because public colleges and universities need to make better decisions in lieu of having to do more with less and must rely on knowledgeable department chairpersons to accomplish such goals at the local level. Adams, Robichaux and Guarino say (2010), "Reduced

state appropriations have forced public institutions to raise tuition substantially, while rising costs, notably in health care benefits, likely have led public colleges and universities to seek more frugal approaches to management" (p. 8). These "frugal approaches" have important consequences for the broader domain of more "pronounced" hierarchies in public colleges and universities (2010, p. 8), which could arguably result in additional pressures for the chairperson.

Additional reasons why chairs need to get up to speed quickly include far more policy implementation and reporting than faculty are used to dealing with, budget and planning, as well as a new chair's role in developing junior faculty. The department chair also makes decisions that span a larger, more complex relationship with other campus units like legal services, diversity planning, and human resources (Boyko, 2009; Seagren, 1993; Wheeler, 2008). As such, department chairs would do well to know how to negotiate a contract, interpret medical leave, and deal with formal grievance procedures before they require attention. Finally, studying how new chairs get up to speed quickly contributes to understanding the persistence of role ambiguity in the department chair post, the job satisfaction of department chairpersons and their intent to leave, as well as the need to inform the selection and subsequent training of new department chairs.

<div align="center">Background of the Study</div>

Research about the department chair role is abundant within higher education and includes notable scholarship around how people prepare for the role (e.g., Hecht, 2006; Wolverton, Ackerman, & Holt, 2005), how to do it (e.g., Gmelch & Burns, 1993; Tucker, 1984), and what the job involves (e.g., Boyko, 2009; Seagren, 1993). Though these works are an important source of department chair scholarship, what is strangely missing from the group and the larger body of higher education research is empirical studies of the transition and

development of faculty members into the new role of department chair (Gmelch, 1991). As such, organizational literature is also used in the present study because of the extant research addressing transitions and development of newcomers. The paucity of academic middle management scholarship could be because professionalizing any role within the university, similar to students being referred to as "client" or "customer," is "characteristically not expressed as consensual" (Clegg & McAuley, 2005, p. 29) and is for some, unequivocally linked to possible losses of academic autonomy (Gappa, Austin & Trice, 2007). Likewise, when it comes to the topic of manager in academe, many take opposite positions ready to debate closely held values as they pertain to collegial decision-making processes (Hellawell & Hancock, 2001). The term "manager" is largely an un-welcomed one in academic circles and even balanced perspectives acknowledging a "collegiate/managerialism dualism" have underlying tensions (Clegg & McAuley, 2003; Duke, 2001; Eckel, 2006; Hancock & Hellawell, 2003; Rhoades & Sporn, 2002; Santiago & Carvalho, 2008; Shattock, 2002). Boyko in her recently published and seminal dissertation examining the academic department chair in Canadian universities offers useful thoughts on what has been dubbed the "managerialist" movement:

> It is understood that the "managerialist" movement is anchored in a number of free market principles that are contributing to a reconsideration of financial structures internationally and may shift toward strengthened accountability imperatives and government oversight in certain jurisdictions for various sectors, with trickle down impacts on the academy and the roles and responsibilities of department chairs. (Boyko, 2009, p. 6)

Despite the outcomes of free market principles, trying to understand the department chair role is not a new phenomenon and research on the responsibilities of the position consistently shows it to be ambiguous, unclear, and complicated to classify as faculty or administrator (Bennett & Figuli, 1990; Boyko, 2009; Seagren, 1993; Westcott, 2000). Although the position may be ambiguous as it sits between faculty and career administration, scholars often neglect to

consider the organizational meaning and context of the academic middle manager in the university. Management is a fluid process not monopolized by one individual or enacted in only one circumstance (Druskat & Wheeler, 2003; Jablin et al., 1994; Scarborough, 1998). Similarly, management is not limited to generic recipes pulled when circumstances call for how-to guides (e.g., Creswell, Wheeler, Egly, & Beyer, 1990; Lees, Malik, & Vemuri, 2009; McArthur, 2002; Wheeler, Seagren, Becker, Kinley, Mlinek, & Robson, 2008).

Many in academia would object that a discussion about department chairs as middle managers ought to occur, and they may be right. However, continuing pressures of governmental and public accountability, as well as real market competition from for-profit educational organizations, for example, provide a reason to consider steering an academic middle management argument rather than fighting against it (Shulman, 2007). And although I mostly agree with scholars who hold at a distance any hint of management language attached to the department chairperson, I cannot accept their argument that department chair duties do not beg for an integration of some ideas from management literature.

Giving space to the idea of the role of middle manager, and in an effort to situate an argument for the present study, it is advantageous to explore various perspectives of middle management found in the literature. Additionally, talking about the department chair as middle manager appropriately emphasizes the "middleness" of the role within the organizational structure of the institution.

Among those studying middle management few present a distinct definition of the term. The way scholars speak about the middle level is usually by talking around it, hoping the reader will somehow land on a view of what middle management means. This is not to say having concise language is always more helpful, but perhaps clear words allow for a faster orientation to

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an author's framework. Mintzberg (1989) provides such an orientation, defining a middle manager as one who is in "a hierarchy of authority between the operating core and the apex" (p. 98), an idea not unlike what exists for the department chair in higher education who is at the same time a link between faculty and administration (Smith & Wolverton, 2010; Westcott, 2000; Williams, 2007). Clegg and McAuley (2005, p. 21) capture different definitions of middle management including one from Uyterhoeven (1972) who said a general manager is someone with responsibilities for a specific unit in the middle of the structural hierarchy and Dopson, Risk, and Stewart (1992) who claim middle managers are people underneath a handful of top executives yet above front-line supervision. In a similar way, Clegg and McAuley (2005) discuss Kanter's (1979) description of significant power attributed to middle managers due to the position's central nature within the organization. Other scholars explain the position from a relational standpoint establishing place within the organization by talking about the fact middle managers are "living" between superiors and subordinates (cf. Jaeger & Pekruhl, 1998; Uyterhoeven, 1989) nurturing the internal connections of the organization while being simultaneously pinched between policy obligations they do not guide (Couch, 1979; Clegg & McAuley, 2005; Ghoshal & Bartlett, 1998; Kanter, 1986).

"Living" between superiors and subordinates in an institutional context and specifically, for the department chair means "living" between deans and faculty. Existing between faculty and administration means that chairs as conductors of vital information must posture themselves in such a way that does not undercut their effectiveness with peers in the department or the senior administration above them (Lees et al., 2009). Chairpersons are not only the target of accountability from senior administration but also in the middle of navigating a complicated, turbulent, and sometimes convoluted and drawn out process of decision making and realization

(Waltzer, 2002). This complexity is exacerbated by the fact chairs instinctively hold that their role is to take on most of the administrative overhead, which is taxed further when senior administration interferes with such efforts (Kelly, 2004; Murray, 2003). Furthermore, the department chair's list of functions comes from deans, which is heavily influenced by the dean's own personnel philosophy and work ethic and not limited to policies and institutional histories (2002).

In their study "Preparing for leadership: What academic department chairs need to know," Wolverton et al. (2005) lay out a plan to prepare new department chairs to cope with being caught in the middle. From one dean's perspective the ability to navigate the relationships from the middle included being able to, "…successfully stand their ground with both deans and faculty without irritating either group to the point of insurrection'' (p. 230). Though likely unintended, the dean's comment only mentioned irritating groups beyond a "point of insurrection," possibly leaving room for the idea that department chairs will still have to sort out how to manage the proverbial irritation of being in the middle in the first place.

Admittedly, simply stating there are folks above and below department chairs does not give license to adopt any "managerialist" orientation, but recognizing the placement of the department chair within the institutional structure does warrant a different kind of discussion. My point is that talking about the role of department chair from endless lists of tasks and duties, as so much of the higher education literature does (Wolverton, Gmelch, Wolverton, & Sarros, 1999), is not helpful in comprehending how such a pivotal leadership role may benefit from more theory-based research (Gmelch, 1991). Moreover, according to Amey, Eddy, and Campbell (2010), the placement of one's position affects how one is viewed in that role and gives credence to the notion that being in the middle may actually attract double the pressure.

I have talked about the "middleness" of the department chair within the organizational structure of the institution emphasizing the role as opposed to lists of tasks and functions. I have attempted to affirm the value of considering the department chair within the framework of middle management by dissuading the addition to or creation of more and longer lists of activities. What is needed in the higher education literature is discussion on developing the role of new department chairpersons. I am not referring to a discussion of training programs, which are necessary given the shortage of socialization procedures for new department chairs though prominent ones exist, e.g., Department Leadership Program at the American Council on Education (ACE). I am referring to discussions about those factors that help explain how new department chairs figure out answers to questions like, "What's going on here?" "What can I do about it?" and "Do I have the latitude to do something about it?" Part of understanding a department chair's certainty of their role may lay in the operationalization of the experience brought to the position (i.e., role confidence), the personality needs of the individual in the chair job, and the support they receive while in the role (i.e., leader support).

Statement of the Problem

Making contributions as a new department chair is first dependent upon how new chairs see themselves in the role (Gmelch, 1991). The period of "discontinuity and flux" (Ashforth & Saks, 1995, p. 157) unique to the department chair job impairs a newcomer's ability to be certain about what the role entails and subsequently how to react to any conclusions reached. My research suggests a way of understanding how new chairs might see the barriers to understanding their role more clearly than current theory and research has offered. Specifically, I propose that a new chair's role confidence, personality needs, and role support help to explain the degrees of difference among and between new department chairs'

sense of role certainty. After two decades of conference presentations, journal articles, and

tomes on the department chair role, we still have few data-based studies for understanding

how individuals perceive themselves and their professional challenges in the post of

department chair (Gmelch, 1991). This should not come as too much of a surprise when we

know little, if any, institutional training is available for helping chairs navigate their new and

multiple roles (Bensimon, Ward, & Sanders, 2000; Gmelch, 1991; Werkema, 2009, p. 127).

Even so, the purpose of this scholarship is to offer an empirical study to begin meeting the

need.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to discover to what degree role confidence, personality needs,

and role support predict the role certainty of new department chairs (see Figure 1.1).

Through quantitative and non-experimental survey research, I sought to discover how

select variables might steer higher education research away from descriptive checklists of

department chair tasks and towards unrealized governing variables (Argyris & Schön, 1976),

which may help predict how to help new department chairs get up to speed. Though helpful at

one level, Amey (1989) best sums up the futility in defining roles by virtue of descriptive

checklists within the context of the chief academic officer, a position with similar managerial

characteristics to the department chair. Says Amey,

> Identifying functions of the chief academic officer can be useful in assessing daily
> behavior of an individual or perhaps in providing evaluative job performance criteria. But
> the chief academic officer is being called upon to assume a greater leadership role in
> shaping educational strategy and direction. In trying to understand the academic vice
> president as a leader, it takes more than a title, a list of job functions and anecdotal
> refrains. (p. 12)

Figure 1.1.
A Model of Factors Influencing Role Certainty of New Department Chairs

Role confidence

| Novelty |
| Discretion |

Personality needs

| Need for control |
| Need for feedback |
| Intolerance for ambiguity |

Role support

| Leader feedback |
| Department climate |

Role certainty
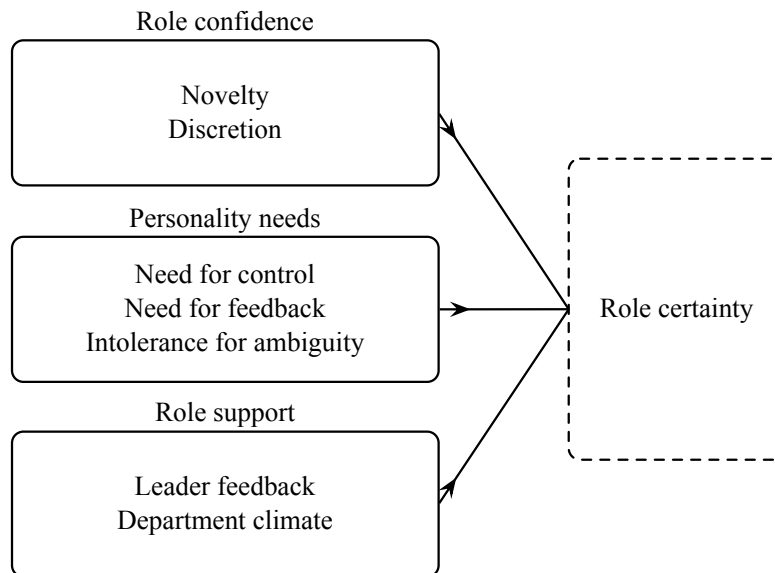
As a central point where the managerial and academic sectors of the institution converge, Gmelch and Burns (1993) argue the department chair offers a locus of consideration for comprehending the job, but grant it is also where the difficulty in understanding the precarious nature (Williams, 2007) of the role starts. Better understanding the role of department chair as a point of reference in the institutional hierarchy is important if only for one reason. Department chairs are in the middle of relationships, and are responsible for crucial tasks and activities in areas such as institutional policies and procedures, faculty appointments, promotions and tenure, budgets, class schedules and teaching assignments (Boyko, 2009; McDaniel, 2002; Seagren, 1993; Sieg, 1986; Tucker 1984, 1992; Watson, 1979, 1986; Wolverton, Gmelch, Wolverton & Sarros, 1999). Focusing on points of convergence (Gmelch & Burns, 1993) also necessarily includes a discussion that department chairs bring with them various meanings including living as a subordinate, an equal, and as a superior (Clegg & McAuley, 2005; Uyterhoeven, 1972). It is also reasonable to say attention is drawn to the department chair as a point of convergence in part

because of the department itself.

<p style="text-align: center;">Significance of the Study</p>

By better understanding how new chairs might see the barriers to understanding their role more clearly than current theory and research offers, the present study addresses the general problem of role uncertainty among new department chairs. If it is true that 80% of all institutional decisions occurs at the department chair level (Roach, 1976) and that approximately one quarter, or 20,000 of the 80,000 plus scholars currently serving as department chairs will need to be replaced each year (Gmelch, 1991), then the academic community ought to be interested in mechanisms aiding new chairs in making good decisions right away. The quick timing is because external accountability, diminishing public support, and reduced state appropriations are already a reality for many institutions of higher education (Adams, Robichaux, & Guarino, 2010). Placed in today's terms there exist 50,275 scholars currently serving as department chairs (College Faculty & Administrators, 2011) based upon self-reported data to Market Data Retrieval (MDR). Arguably this number is low, however, even a quarter of this figure indicates that 12,569 department chairs will need replaced at the end of this academic year, i.e., 2012, raising a concern for me to the extent and effects of widespread role uncertainty among new chairs.

In providing data-based research for understanding what affects getting to role certainty for new chairs, this project contributes to the body of higher education literature in four major ways. One, it offers a model for thinking about reducing the role ambiguity of new chairs – a response intuitive to the commonly accepted view the job is vague. Two, it stresses the need for more conversations about what help is offered new chairs given they cannot in general draw upon experience from their faculty role due to vast differences. Three, this study extends the

work of department chair scholarship from prominent specialists like Gmelch (1991, 1993, 1995, 2004, 2004, & 2006), Carroll (1991, 1992, 2004), Smith (1998, 1999, 2010), and Wolverton (1998, 1999, 2005). Lastly, by simultaneously considering how experience, personality, and context explain role certainty among and between new chairs this project offers findings based upon a fundamental acknowledgement of the complexities surrounding how people and social systems interact (Ashforth & Saks, 1995; Kozlowski 2003; Louis, 1990; Nicholson 1984; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992; Smith 1999; Sutton 1987; Van Maanen 1979).

Research Design and Questions

Ultimately, this study proposes that making contributions is dependent first upon the perception a new department chair has of their role and draws upon the newcomer's individual characteristics, the role's context, and the role's characteristics in forming such a view. This combination provides a way of explaining the degrees of difference among and between new department chairs' sense of role certainty. This research attempts to correct a hole in the research of earlier authors that did not take elements like intolerance for ambiguity, leader feedback, and work climate into account together to form a broad understanding of the role certainty of newcomers. This thinking led to the following research questions for the present study:

1. How well do a new department chair's role confidence, personality needs, and role support predict role certainty among new department chairs?

2. What is the relative contribution of each scale to the role certainty of new chairs?

The purpose of the present study is to describe new department chairs as a group comparing differences between independent experiences of large numbers of people, and uncover patterns that may exist among them. A quantitative design was chosen for this research to be able to generalize from a sample to a population about the role certainty of new department

chairs. Also, a survey was employed to collect data on the same variables from many cases and to report not only the characteristics of a set of cases, but any variations from specific variables across cases (DeVaus, 2002).

The survey instrument was designed primarily to collect data on three categories and their subsequent variables: (a) role confidence (i.e., novelty, and discretion); (b) personality needs (i.e., need for control, need for feedback, and intolerance for ambiguity); and (c) role support (leader feedback and department climate) (see Appendix A). All scales were adapted from prominent studies in the higher education and organizational literature.

<center>Conceptual Framework</center>

The present study is broadly connected to two different frameworks in two adjoining disciplines: academic middle management in higher education and career transitions from organizational literature. The work of Dill (1982, 1984) and Clegg and McAuley (2005) provide a framework of academic middle management in higher education. For career transitions I drew upon the work of Pinder and Schroeder (1987) and Nicholson (1984).

The first component of my conceptual framework is built around the writings of Dill (1982, 1984) and Clegg and McAuley (2005). Dill, author of "The Management of Academic Culture" (1982) and "The Nature of Administrative Behavior in Higher Education" (1984) argues that drawing on managerial techniques makes sense if institutions are vying for reduced financial resources, quality students, and for capable faculty, not to mention the pursuit of greater institutional recognition. He continues by highlighting that like the corporate sector there is within higher education personnel concerns, budgets that need reworked, and priority-based decisions about areas that will grow and develop quality programs. Ultimately, he posits the institution that chooses to promote individual development will produce superior loyalty and

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longevity from workers, an idea far from some practices in higher education where getting everything out of someone and hoping they last can be a theme (Cullen, Joyce, Hassall, & Broadbent, 2003). Agreeing with Dill, I argue that methods for recruiting, socializing and training department chairs are worth considering in a more systemic way, and are motivation for the present study.

In a similar way, the work of Clegg and McAuley (2005) brings to the structure of my research both support of Dill's work, but also a tempering of his thoughts suggesting the discussion that ought to occur in higher education is one that moves beyond the "managerialism/collegiate duality" (p. 19) so prevalent in the literature. Furthermore, and perhaps more critically Clegg and McAuley offer an invitation for how the more general literature on middle management might be a benefit to higher education. Their work brings to light the idea that management is a multifaceted phenomenon and is generally poorly understood in academic circles. They point out that the growth of discussions about academic middle management occurred due to many higher education institutions transforming from highly select to largely open institutions, a perspective supported in the selection of my sample of comprehensive regional universities. They go on to say there exists evidence that academic middle management is key to any long-lasting change in important areas such as teaching and learning and the shaping of significant pedagogical and institutional goals. In making this comment, Clegg and McAuley point out the significance for conversations about academic middle management, in general, and at the same time create a platform for my study. This platform supports an investigation into the claim that role certainty is the gateway of time to proficiency for new department chairs and ultimately is the factor controlling contributions made to the university.

The second component of this study's conceptual framework is the thinking from organizational scholars on career transitions. Specifically, I draw upon Pinder and Schroeder's (1987) idea of time to proficiency following a work role transition, and Nicholson's (1984) own theory on work role transitions.

The significant contribution made by Pinder and Schroeder (1987) to my own framework is their attention to leader support. What they found was that the perceived amount of support someone receives after a work role transition is critical as a predictor of the time to proficiency at a new job. In making this finding, they stress the importance of the supervisor/supervisee relationship and highlight the predictive value of role support. Essentially, the discovery of leader support for new department chairs is expected in the present study to confirm Pinder and Schroeder's observation that while "Support does not by itself cause change…it makes change possible" (p. 341).

Another important aspect of the work of Pinder and Schroeder (1987) is their thinking on how a transition affects both the individual and the larger organization, a notion paralleled in Nicholson's (1984) work. When it comes to the topic of transitions, most individuals readily agree interruptions of schedules and habits both at work and at home can result in anxiety and stress (Brett, 1982, 1984) among people who transfer from one job to another. Where this agreement usually ends, however, is on the question of how transitions affect the larger organization. Pinder and Schroeder help extend the conversation. They suggest the total investment an organization provides in a new employee is far more than the return of actual contributions a newcomer makes for some time after a work role transition (Pinder & Das, 1979). In short, the longer the time it takes for someone to make sense of things and become proficient, the "greater the cost of a transfer to an organization" (1987, p. 338). In other words,

transfers initially hurt the organization or institution due to the time taken to get up to speed in the new job.

Prior to the work of Pinder and Schroeder (1987), Nicholson (1984) posited that transfers affect the organization with the caveat that the personal attributes of individuals play a more critical piece in time to proficiency. Specifically, Nicholson (1984) presents a conceptual framework around four defined modes used to label how individuals personally adjust to the role, or adjust the role to better fit their needs when changing to a new role. Nicholson developed the theory by focusing on transitions to a new role together with organizational and personal adjustment outcomes, as well as the attributes of the individual, the role, and the organization. He argues transfers in and out of organizations can have definitive significance for the growth of employees and the organizations where they work and believes studying transitions offers insight about the development of organizations. Nicholson's theory is used to look at both the role and the individual, and to operationalize a "person's subjective perceptions of job requirements" (1984, p. 179). While I agree that the extent to which a new role appears to be different from and more complex than a previous role, the longer it takes for newcomers to get up to speed after a transfer (1987), I cannot accept that how individuals see themselves within the role can be minimized or left out from the equation.

My research is consistent with previous research on three commonly accepted ideas about transitions. One, I consider the individual when thinking about the transition process, an idea consistent with Nicholson's (1984) thinking. Two, I consider leader support critical to the discussion on transitions, which is in line with Pinder and Schroeder (1987). And three, I investigate the relative contribution of prior experience, an idea central to both Pinder and Schroeder and Nicholson.

Finally and most essential, all of the scholars claimed here as contributors to the conceptual framework of my study agree on one thing: those in the middle of organizations make significant contributions oftentimes without recognition by senior administration and are in effect the catalysts for profound institutional change (Clegg & McAuley, 2005; Dill, 1982; 1984; Nicholson, 1984; Pinder & Das, 1984; Pinder & Schroeder, 1987).

Definition of Terms

The following section consists of all the variables to be investigated in this study. Variables are presented and briefly defined in alphabetical order. Characteristics of the sample are also explained and incorporate both inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Role Confidence

Role confidence is the first of three independent variables and is defined as a person's ability to rely on previous work experience and apply that experience to the present position increasingly over time. Role confidence includes scales for novelty and discretion.

Personality Needs

The second independent variable is personality needs, or psychological characteristics, and is defined in this study as an individual's requirement for regulating the clarity of task-related knowledge as it applies to the role. The scales comprising personality need for control, need for feedback, and include intolerance for ambiguity. These scales are explained in detail in chapter three.

Role support

The last variable to make up the list of independent variables is role support. Role support is defined as the availability of performance related assistance cues to employees from one's direct supervisor and the daily work environment. The construct role support is comprised of the

scales leader feedback and department climate.

Role Certainty

The dependent variable for this study is role certainty and is defined as a firm conviction that one's belief about a role is true. The term role certainty has been offered to establish a baseline for talking about socialization and time to proficiency paradigms within the higher education context. Role certainty is made up of three scales: role development, role ambiguity, and role self-efficacy.

Population

The population of interest for this study is new department chairs. New department chairs has been defined for this study as those persons who have been in the role between 0 and 3 years; respondents were asked to round up to the nearest year. The population selection was figured first from the lens of institutional type, then by a series of filters including a selection of public, 4-year or above institutions, as well as those having a 0% change in state appropriations and other revenue sources for fiscal year 2009 – 2010. The data were collected via a questionnaire designed by the author and housed on SurveyMonkey.com. The primary method of data collection was a census. Every department chair of the identified institutions was asked to participate in this study. As a result, a census of the 64 institutions was taken in the hopes of qualifying through the first few questions on the questionnaire those for whom I wished to collect data.

Overview of the Dissertation

The second chapter of the dissertation is a review of pertinent scholarship from both higher education and organizational literature. Specifically, I provide a justification, examination, and commentary surrounding the topic of academic middle management in higher

education. Each of the variables is described against appropriate research, and evaluated for its contribution to the present research. Chapter three provides a full account of how I carried out the study. In chapter four I present a report of the data with supporting tables and figures. The final chapter provides an interpretation of the research findings as related to existing theory and research. Finally, I relate the research findings to new department chairs and the institutions at which they work.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Through a presentation of past research in the fields of higher education and

organizational theory this chapter provides justification, examination, and commentary of the

problem under consideration. Results of relevant research including gaps and conclusions that

have been reached will be discussed in light of the research question, "How well do a new

department chair's role confidence, personality needs, and role support predict role certainty

among new department chairs?" First, I will review research on the role certainty of new

department chairs setting up a methodological framework for this study's analysis. Second, I will

address each of the study's predictor variables, namely, role confidence, personality needs, and

role support. Throughout, I will synthesize the findings by discussing broader themes in an effort

to summarize the rationale for this study, as well as evaluate the studies reviewed and their

relationship to the present scholarship.

This study proposes that making contributions in one's role is indicative of the perception

one has of the role and suggests the combination of role confidence, select personality needs, and

role support help explain what influences this perception.

Overview

The literature I reviewed focused on department chairs, management, and organizational

behavior, including socialization and career transitions in the work place. What I found was that

organizational theory is often more useful than the higher education literature in talking about

new department chairs because it looks at the place of the middle manager in the organization,

something the higher education scholarship does less often when talking about the department

chair position. More particularly, organizational theory offers ideas that deal with the demands of

one's job mixed with a person's individual characteristics and how those things work together. As a result, I first give an overview of Nicholson's work role transition theory (1984) and then mention five studies from organizational theory, elaborating on two studies in particular.

<p style="text-align:center">Nicholson's Work Role Transition Theory (1984)</p>

Work role transition theory developed by Nicholson (1984) helped to guide the present research because it offers a way to talk about how individuals personally adjust to a role, or adjust the role to better fit their needs when changing to a new role. The theory is used to look at both the role and the individual, and to discover a person's individual view of job responsibilities (Nicholson, 1984, p. 179). Nicholson suggests little has been done to see how the attributes of people might factor into or influence the socialization processes and outcomes of organizations and asks, "How does the interaction between individuals and social systems affect either?" (1984, p. 172). Using the demands of the roles between which the person is moving (i.e., role requirements), the mental aspects and motives (i.e., motivational orientations), the previous socialization into new roles (i.e., prior occupational socialization), and any current socialization by the employee's organization, the theory centers around transitions to a new role together with organizational and personal adjustment outcomes, as well as the attributes of the individual, the role, and the organization. Nicholson argues transitions into and out of organizations can significantly affect the growth of people and the organizations they work for and believes studying transitions offers insight about the development of organizations. Other scholars agree with Nicholson's proposition and have used his theory for the basis of their own work.

Ashforth and Saks' (1995) study, "Work-role transitions: A longitudinal examination of the Nicholson model" is one example and is an exemplar among the others. In particular, their study is important because the authors compare and contrast others who also utilized

Nicholson's work role transition theory and brings to one place the differences and similarities found in testing Nicholson's (1984) theory. For example, Ashford and Saks highlighted West et al. (1987) who discovered the novelty met by managers transitioning into new roles predicted personal development. Other studies mentioned include West and Rushton (1989) who learned nursing students trained in a culture of low discretion and high novelty self-reported high levels of personal development and a low realization of role development. Also, West (1987) found managers recognized high levels of personal and role development in jobs where discretion and novelty were both high. West may be a central investigator in all of these studies because he was a former student of Nicholson's and had a role in testing the theory three (1987) and five years (1989) after its development in 1984.

In the same piece that Ashforth and Saks (1995) reviewed all others who had used Nicholson's theory (1984), they also tested its value. In particular, they determined the influence of three of four areas from which Nicholson proposed modes of work adjustment are drawn including role requirements (i.e., discretion and novelty), motivational orientations (i.e., desire for control, desire for feedback), and prior occupational socialization (discretionary shift, novelty of role demands). The authors did not look at socialization processes. What they found was only moderate support for Nicholson's model and a realization that work adjustment concepts may be better suited to populations of experienced people within a specific career path. Furthermore, Ashforth and Saks did not find a significant correlation between personal and role development, agreeing with weak correlations reported by others.

One of the self-admitted limitations of Ashforth and Saks' (1995) study is that in order to discover whether work experience influences discretion, one needs to include those with work experience, something their sample of undergraduates likely did not have. Even so, the

study offers a reasonable argument for evaluating work role transition theory. The authors suggest future researchers use different sources of data (e.g., peers, supervisors) to supplement self-reporting measures. Additionally, they propose that new research ought to look at the strength of the theory among persons in other work role transitions, such as, "promotions, international job transfers, occupational changes and appointments to task forces" (Ashforth & Saks, 1995, p. 171). Also, the authors suggest work role transition theory assumes the position of work adjustment as experiences in isolation as if to say newcomers react apart from other personal and organizational influences. This idea reinforces the larger point that work role change is a complex array of personal and contextual elements.

Despite the shortcomings of Nicholson's efforts, Ashforth and Saks (1995) conclude work role transition theory offers a useful beginning for future discussions about the nuances of changing to a new job and positively contributes to the larger literature on work role transitions theory. In closing, the authors suggest, new research might consider the intersection of personal and role development and how the pieces of each work together.

The work by Black and Ashford comes close to this goal. In their study "Fitting In or Making Jobs Fit: Factors Affecting Mode of Adjustment for New Hires," Black and Ashford (1995) also look at role requirements, motivational orientations, and prior occupational socialization as possible predictors of personal and role development. This makes their study the fifth in a line of research (West et al., 1987; West & Rushton, 1989) testing the utility of Nicholson's (1984) theory. By examining nearly all the categories and commenting on previous work, Black and Ashford provide a helpful summary of past research on work role transitions. Additionally, according to the authors, no research has looked concurrently at Nicholson's variables as predictors of both work and personal adjustment making the findings important.

What they found was that individuals likely employ a number of adjustment tactics that go farther than only changing themselves (i.e., personal development) or changing their jobs (i.e., role development), suggesting, more modes of adjustment need to be studied. Moreover, the results of the variables measured only show a nominal influence on personal development and even less influence on role development as modes of adjustment. In short, the study shows the variables appear to be more related to "self-change" than changing one's job, a result that begs asking in what ways we can learn about "self-change."

Limitations

While work role transition theory provides an initial way of talking about how newcomers specifically may adjust personally, adjust their role, or both, the theory fails to address how newcomers face organizational "histories, cultures, and structures" (Black & Ashford, 1995, p. 422) not easily conquered by individuals. Moreover, Nicholson's theory does not acknowledge that people are engaged mentally and behaviorally with their dynamic environment (Mitchell & James, 1989) supporting the idea people cannot effectively be separated from their context.

Both Black and Ashford's (1995) and Ashforth and Saks' (1995) studies are vital in understanding some of the value and limitations of Nicholson's (1984) work role transition theory. Moreover, they help to underscore where future research ought to go. Both studies draw our attention to the fact Nicholson's theory, while a great basis for thinking and talking about work role transitions is too limited and narrow, resulting in mixed support for work role transitions theory. Using Nicholson's theory does not consistently predict modes of adjustment from role requirements, motivational orientations, prior occupational socialization, and socialization processes. Additionally, the studies conclude modes of adjustment may involve

much more than personal and role development.

Though there have been challenges to Nicholson's theory, none has called for an elimination of the theory, or even questioned its core worth. In a similar declaration of the theory's value the present study uses it as a backdrop from which to think and talk about the role certainty of new department chairs resulting from their transition into the position. Nicholson's theory is used for this study over Van Maanen and Schein's (1979) well-known theoretical work on socialization in the workplace because Nicholson emphasizes the personal attributes of the individual in question. Specifically, it is Nicholson's emphasis and combination of the demands of the job (i.e., role requirements) and an individual's own characteristics (i.e., motivational orientations) as influential factors leading to role certainty that is of interest. And because Nicholson's theory is the only theory to date to address one's ability to alter the "networks of goals and means-end relationships involving both people and materials" (1984, p. 177) related to work role transitions, it offers a rich point of departure for talking about role certainty. By using Nicholson's theory I continue the conversation about work role transitions and bring attention to the study of transitions from faculty member to new department chair, something missing in the higher education literature overall. Few studies exist in the higher education literature specifically related to chair transitions and socialization at all (cf., Gmelch, 1991; Gmelch & Burns, 1993; Smith & Stewart, 1999; Staton-Spicer, 1987; Werkema, 2005). As such, and in addition to Nicholson's work role transition theory, the literature most closely aligned with the present study comes from the emerging literature on career transitions and extensive body of socialization work in organizational theory. As a caveat the research presented here is a shortened representation of the socialization literature. For a thorough investigation of the topic, the reader should consult Ashforth, Sluss, and Harrison (2007); Cooper-Thomas and Anderson

(2005); Crant (2000); Jablin (1984, 1987, 2001); and Sonnentag, Niessen, and Ohly (2004).

<p style="text-align:center">Dependent Variable, Role Certainty</p>

The dependent variable for this study is role certainty and is defined here as a firm conviction that one's belief of what the role is about is true. Role certainty is also used as an umbrella term to capture a number of other concepts presented in organizational theory including role ambiguity (Ashford & Cummings, 1985; Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Ashforth, Sluss, & Saks, 2007; Black, 1988; Cicerto, Pierro, & Van Knippenberg, 2010; Hart & Miller, 2005; Haynes, Wall, Bolden, Stride, & Rick, 1999; House & Rizzo, 1972; Miller & Jablin, 1991; Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970), role innovation (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Ashforth & Saks, 1995; 1996; Black & Ashford, 1995; Hart & Miller, 2005; Munton & West, 1995; Nicholson, 1984), role development (Ashforth & Saks, 1995; Jain & Maltarich, 2009; Major, Kozlowski, Chao, and Gardner, 1995; Nicholson, 1984), and newcomer adjustment (Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Bauer, Bodner, Erdogan, Truxillo, & Tucker, 2007). What is central to the notion of role certainty though is newcomer learning, which is not explicit in these other terms.

Newcomer learning is the premise behind adjusting to a work situation and is therefore related to the role certainty of the new department chair. More than a few socialization stage models highlight newcomer learning as a critical component of socialization (cf., Chao, et al., 1994; Cooper-Thomas, & Anderson, 2005; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992; Morrison, 1993, 1995; Saks & Ashforth, 1997). Whereas, some have tried to simplify the immense research in organizational socialization through various models (e.g., Taormina, 1997) and others have tried to refine previously used measurements (cf., Haueter, Macan, & Winter, 2003; Myers & Oetzel, 2003; Taormina, 1994), my review first looks at selected research on newcomer learning often cited by others, and then presents recent studies that have drawn on these experts.

One study often cited by others is the work by Chao et al. (1994) who focused on the subject matter for learning within concentrated socialization periods. What they found among a study of individuals with six plus years on the job was that the socialization process – and subsequent learning – extends well beyond the newcomer stage and continues the longer a person is in the role. This finding is consistent with Werkema's (2009) dissertation, "Making Sense of Roles and Responsibilities: A Socialization Study of College and University Music Department Chairs." Werkema's study is the most recent empirical work found addressing the socialization of department chairs. The impetus for his study was the claim many new department chairs were not well supported for their "troubled," "lonely and isolated experience" upon entry into the role. As such, he sought to study how people learn to function as department chairs. Werkema's qualitative study contributes to the department chair literature by drawing personal reflections of department chairs' learning their role. Others like Klein, Fan, and Preacher (2006) focused on the influence of realism of pre-entry knowledge and agent helpfulness – a term similar to the present study's role support – on socialization content and outcomes. They found that realism of pre-entry knowledge of the role and agent helpfulness was correlated with role clarity suggesting newcomer learning has a relationship with how much an interviewee knows about the job before starting it. Moreover, Klein and Fan (2000) found that newcomer learning enhanced the influence of an orientation program on employees' commitment to the organization. These findings have important relevance to the current study's emphasis on role certainty and the assertion that newcomer-learning matters for the employee and the organization.

Other scholars studying newcomer learning frequently cite two studies: Miller and Jablin's (1991) "Information Seeking During Organizational Entry: Influences, Tactics, and a

Model of the Process" and Ostroff and Kozlowski's (1992) "Organizational Socialization as a Learning Process: The Role Of Information Acquisition." These studies deal with information seeking, which is a recognized factor in the socialization process. Miller and Jablin's (1991) research on the successful organizational assimilation of new members is a watershed work because they address how new hires get information. In particular, Miller and Jablin (1991) addressed what others missed by considering those elements that may affect new hires selecting one information-seeking tactic over another. As such, they provide a divergent view on the information-seeking tactics of newcomers to those previously presented in the literature (cf. Ashford, 1986; Ashford & Cummings, 1985). Ostroff and Kozlowski's (1992) work was about newcomers' information gathering from varying sources within the organizational context. They found, among other things, that new hires depend mostly on watching others, immediate supervisors, and coworkers to gather information and that the intent for information seeking is foremost on the perceived responsibilities and job-specific aspects. These conclusions have significant applications for the present study because they underscore the need for newcomers to figure out "What's going on here?" Moreover, the findings support the argument put forth by Louis (1980), who said,

> Until newcomers develop accurate internal maps of the new setting, until they appreciate local meaning, it is important that they have information available for amending internal cognitive maps and for attaching meaning to such surprises as may arise during early job experiences. (Louis, 1980, p. 244)

Examples of current research drawing upon Miller and Jablin (1991), as well as Ostroff and Kozlowski (1992) in part or in whole include work on role clarity (Fang, Duffy, & Shaw, 2011; Scott & Myers, 2010; Kammeyer-Mueller, Livingston, & Liao, 2010; Kramer, 2010; Krasman, 2010), expatriate adjustment (Farh, Bartol, Shapiro, & Shin, 2010; Moeller, Harvey, &

Williams, 2010), as well as further development of socialization theory and practice (Saks & Gruman, 2011; Thomas, Whitman, & Viswesvaran, 2010).

<div align="center">Predictor Variables</div>

Role Confidence

Role confidence is a person's ability to rely on previous work experience and apply that experience to the present position increasingly over time. No study in either higher education or organizational theory focuses directly on "role confidence." As a result the following words were used to identify research applicable to the notion of role confidence: (a) skills, competencies, and functions; (b) knowledge; and (c) background.

In general, only a handful of studies found in higher education and organizational theory mention the experience of workers (Allen 1990; Davies 2009; Gmelch 1993; Krasman 2009; Mercer 2009; Paulus 2003; Smith 1999; Unferth 2001; Wood & Bandura, 1989) let alone their tendency to draw upon it for the present job. Moreover, the experiences to which these authors refer are the experiences workers have while in the role of department chair or as a middle manager, not prior to the role. Though Gmelch (1991) provides data on how new chairs may look back to their full-time faculty work experience for help in the new role, his work is more about the "surprises" and "unexpected sacrifices" rooted in the department chair role. Specifically, he describes the personal and professional tradeoffs faculty members face when moving into the new job. What is interesting about Gmelch's findings is that when asked, "Do [department chairs] now perceive themselves as 'administrators' or do they retain their faculty identity?" 60% identified themselves as faculty, whereas only 23% identified as administration (p. 5). Such a comparison reaffirms Seedorf (1990) who discovered that making contributions in the short-term is made worse when numerous department chairpersons never make a complete

<div align="center">28</div>

mental transition from faculty member to the role of department chair. As a result Gmelch argues there is a leadership crisis in higher education. Other research related to the experience of workers primarily focuses upon the skills, competencies, and functions of a role (Bartram, 2005; McLaughlin, Montgomery, & Robert, 1977; Seagren, 1993; Sieg, 1986; Smith & Wolverton, 2010; Spendlove, 2007; Staton-Spicer, 1987; Wolverton, Gmelch, Wolverton, & Sarros, 1999) and is less relevant to the orientation of my study.

Assuming knowledge is the antecedent to the application of experience reveals a number of studies related to the notion of role confidence though not particular to department chairs. These include studies investigating contextual knowledge as an aid to persons in a role (Dutton, Ashford, O'Neill, & Lawrence, 2001), knowledge as a navigational tool (Hancock & Hellawell, 2003), knowledge for leveraging organizational change (Huy, 2001), and seeking knowledge as a form of organizational socialization (Miller & Jablin, 1991; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992).

With the exception of Carroll's (1991) and Schaffer's (1985) scholarship, no studies were found dealing strictly with the background of department chairs. Carroll's (1991) "Career Paths of Department Chairs: A National Perspective" looked at the career movement of department chairs prior to them becoming chair. She found that most chairs (i.e., 65%) go back to faculty work after their time as chair and that gender, departmental hiring practices, and discipline all influenced the chance a chair would return to faculty life or pursue more administrative jobs. Though the findings were interesting, the study differed from this one in that the focus was not about whether chairs drew upon previous experience, just if they had it and whether they could use it for career movement. Schaffer's (1985) work on the other hand has more in common with the present study. In her dissertation, Schaffer investigated the role conflict of chairpersons at eight universities in Canada and discovered in part that prior experience was important to role

learning. Schaffer's conclusions were largely non-generalizable for two reasons. One, results were based upon nominal non-parametric correlational techniques questioning the strength of her argument, and two, her sample size was only 17.

In sum, no studies really focused on the experience (i.e., role confidence) a faculty member brings to the role of department chair and their ability to draw upon it according to the demands of the new role. Not surprisingly, there is a lack of research on how such previous experience becomes a way of explaining variations in scores among and between new department chairs' sense of role certainty.

Personality Needs

The second in the set of three independent variables is personality needs, or more aptly psychological characteristics. Personality needs is defined for the present study as an individual's requirement for regulating the clarity of task-related knowledge as it applies to the role. A general search for psychological characteristics extends far beyond the scope of this research. As a result, a review of the research was limited to include only "personality needs" and its subsequent parts (i.e., need for control, need for feedback, intolerance for ambiguity) within the purview of work roles in higher education and organizational theory. And, for ease of discussion the term personality needs will be used henceforth.

The literature in higher education offers no comprehensive study on the personality needs of new department chairs. Studies have to be combined loosely to arrive at a composite picture of a new department chair's personal requirements as related to a need for control, need for feedback, and intolerance for ambiguity. Research loosely connected to personality needs of new department chairs tends to be more about how people do the job (cf. Bone 2002; Carroll 1991; Hecht 1999; Peters 1994), who is in the role (Boyko, 2009; Carroll, 2004; Moses & Roe, 1985),

and how people prepare for it (Bone, 2002; Hecht, 2006; Peters, 1994; Staton-Spicer & Spicer, 1987; Wolverton, Ackerman, & Holt, 2005).

Organizational theory may be useful for understanding the role of this factor. The need for control shows up in a handful of key studies, two of which are notable: Greenberger, Cummings, and Dunham's (1981) piece, which seeks to discover the "conceptualization and measurement" of personal control at work, and Greenberger, Strasser, Cummings, and Dunham's (1989) piece, "The impact of personal control on performance and satisfaction." One's need for control holds a central place in the research of Nicholson (1984), which most closely influences this study, as well as the work stemming from Nicholson's research (Ashford & Black, 1995; Ashforth & Saks, 1995; Black & Ashford, 1995).

Need for feedback is a variable well informed by scholarship from organizational theory and includes thinking on individual topics like performance feedback (Chhokar & Wallin, 1984; Larson, 1989; Lurie & Swaminathan, 2009; Morrison, 1993), work adjustment (Ashforth & Saks, 1995; Black & Ashford, 1995; Major, Kozlowski, Chao, & Gardner, 1995; Nicholson, 1984; Pinder & Das, 1979, 1987), and feedback behavior of persons (Ashford & Cummings, 1985; Crant, 2000; De Stobbeleir, Ashford, & de Luque, 2010; Krasman, 2009; Miller & Jablin, 1991). Whereas, several of these studies influenced the methodology of the current study in general (Ashforth & Saks, 1995; Black & Ashford, 1995; Lurie & Swaminathan, 2009; Miller & Jablin, 1991), Lurie and Swaminathan's study was directly applicable. Their research brings is a contemporary perspective to the issue of *frequency* of feedback. They observe that new technologies provide greater frequency for feedback, but contend having more feedback demands the employee to process extreme amounts of recent data and results in a diminished performance.

Lastly, a person's tolerance, or intolerance for role ambiguity, shows up often in organizational theory and is typically tied to such outcomes as job satisfaction (Ashforth 1996; Bauer et al., 2007; Boswell 2009; Cicero 2010; Downey 1975; Greenberger 1989; Haynes 1999; Judge 2002; Roach 1991; Schmitt 1978; Selmer & Lauring, 2011), organizational commitment (Allen 1990; Ashforth 1996; Bauer et al., 2007; Klein 2000), job performance (Bartram 2005; Bauer et al., 2007; Crant 2000), and turnover (Bauer et al., 2007; Black 1995; Cicero 2010; Louis 1980; Major 1995; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992).

Recent research within higher education hypothesizing role ambiguity as a predictor of the aforementioned outcomes is scant and centers instead on issues of job related stress (Gabbidon, 2005; Gmelch, 2006), lack of training upon entering the position (Giuffre, 2007; Mutis, 2009), and more definitional studies looking at what the role is about (Edwards, 2006; Johnson, 2011; Wisdom, 2007; Mutis, 2009; Young, 2008). Interestingly, nearly three quarters of the recent research found in higher education specific to department chairs and role ambiguity was from dissertations (Boyko, 2009; Buffone, 2009; Deurlein, 2007; Edwards 2006; Giuffre, 2007; Johnson, 2011; Mutis, 2009; Williams, 2006; Wisdom, 2007; Young, 2008) perhaps indicating that more work is now being done on the topic.

Despite the fragmented nature of the research describing the personality needs of new department chairs within higher education and newcomers in organizational theory, the studies cited above provide room for new work about the influence of personality needs on the role certainty of new department chairs. Moreover, the gap in the higher education literature solicits research that may provide predictive answers useful in helping new chairs make contributions in their role in spite of a typically short tenure.

Role support

      The third and final variable considered to affect the role certainty of new department chairs is role support. What is important here is the relationship between the dean and the department chair, as it is assumed that deans are structurally in a position to provide supervisory support to department chairs. However, apart from two distinct studies, the higher education literature does not adequately cover the effects of the relationship between the department chair and the dean, never mind dean support.

      The first distinct study is by Hellawell and Hancock (2001). Using Handy (1976, 1977) and Harrison's (1972) organizational culture theories, Hellawell and Hancock found the thinking behind middle managers' view of being managed by their supervisors similar to life within a 'power culture'" (p. 183). The participants in this qualitative study felt pulled between external and internal forces to "become more managerial" and that the pace of the job had dramatically sped up since beginning the position. Additionally, participants felt pressure to be "at least as much resource managers and fund-raising entrepreneurs as they are academic leaders" (p. 191).

      The second study is Hancock and Hellawell's (2003) investigation of fourteen academic middle managers at universities in the United Kingdom. In particular, Hancock and Hellawell found that the middle managers they interviewed agreed performing effectively required a keen sense of the thinking by the administrative level above them. When this knowledge was missing, middle managers believed their performance was handicapped. Interestingly, in extreme cases of resource droughts when told to "make bricks" with "insufficient straw," middle managers felt forced to hide from their peers and supervisors precisely what it was they did, essentially managing the perception of their own image (2003, p. 7). Katz (1980) argued years earlier that middle managers shaped their own image suggesting that newcomers require a need for feedback

as they construct cognitive frameworks about their new situations and themselves. Other scholars argue that individuals do not react apart from other persons and organizational influences, which usually have an effect on how people begin to make sense of a role (Louis, 1980; McCall & Simmons, 1978). Additionally, while coworkers are traditionally seen as important sources of information for newcomers, supervisors are identified more quickly as critical because new hires must in the end win their blessing for role modification (Graen, 1976; Jablin, 1979). Pinder and Schroeder (1987) support this position and point out the expanding literature on career transitions also talks to the role of supervisor support in reducing, "uncertainties, assuaging anxieties and feelings of coercion," and generally helping to make transitions smoother for new hires (1987, p. 340).

Within the higher education context, the dean is a source of feedback and ultimately, support for new department chairs. And, because the dean-department chair dyad is a relationship between two people, *opportunities* for information flow are established. This is not to say that the quality of information flow is directly proportional to the amount (Lurie & Swaminathan, 2009), nor is this study interested in delving into the matter. Rather an assumption is made that quality of information or feedback is not dependent upon the frequency of information offered, but may be a function of it. This study accepts the premise behind Miller and Jablin's (1991) work that individuals have multiple ways of seeking information, but is focused on leader feedback as a variable having direct influence on the role certainty of new department chairs.

According to Louis (1980), as well as McCall and Simmons (1978), relationships generally have a significant influence on how people initially sort out how to respond to new situations and jobs. In particular, leader feedback is critical to the proposed model of role certainty of new

department chairs because as Katz (1980) suggested, the newcomers ameliorate ambiguity mostly through the interactions of information seeking and receiving. By considering leader feedback as part of the development equation we build upon Nicholson's theory (1984) and his use of others' perceptions as the unit of analysis – an idea supported by Gioia and Thomas (1996). In fact, in their article, "Identity, Image, and Issue Interpretation: Sensemaking During Strategic Change in Academia" they give significant attention to its utility. Specifically, they looked at how senior administration in higher education's colleges and universities make sense of critical issues affecting the direction of their institutions. Gioia and Thomas argue that because there exists a scarce amount of "bottom-line measures like profit or return on investment" in the higher education context, shaping perceptions of identity and image becomes a strategy in and of itself. What they found in addition to the fact individuals saw issues related to way they viewed the institutions' identity and image was that "strength-of-identity perceptions" also affected understandings of key issues (p. 380).

Following Gioia and Thomas (1996), "strength-of-identity perceptions" supports a discussion of the supervisor-supervisee connection be it the dean-department chair connection or even the department chair-faculty connection (Roach, 1991; Seagren, 1993; Sieg, 1986; Wolverton, Gmelch, & Sorenson, 1998). For example, Knight and Holen (1985) looked at faculty perceptions of the effectiveness of department heads and showed that leadership styles affected these perceptions. In the same way, Hargreaves (1995) offers an interesting commentary about how perceptions can lead to inaccuracies within self-managing schools:

> Managers frequently underestimate the capacity of staff and students to hide things from them, and so they overestimate the accuracy of their own knowledge about 'what is going on in this school' - or in individual classrooms, which are very loosely coupled to management systems...In this, they may suffer an equivalent of the phantom-limb syndrome, whereby amputees are confident they can still twiddle their toes, until the visual evidence of their stump convinces them that their leg has gone. In the self-managing school

there may be nobody around to tell the head teacher that a whole limb of the school's work has gone awry. (Hargreaves, 1995, p. 225)

What Hargreaves writes is important for the broader domain of understanding how perceptions, when divorced from considering the influence of the supervisor-supervisee association, may affect the role certainty of new chairs. Yet, despite the generally accepted view that what is perceived is real, what remains unaccounted for is the fact the dean-department chair relationship is critical to a new chair's initial growth (Katz, 1985; Miller & Jablin, 1991; Ostroff & Kozslowski, 1992). Furthermore, the dean-department chair relationship presents opportunities for new chairs to test their initial perceptions, which may be exaggerated (Nicholson, 1984). And, it is precisely this exaggeration where individuals attempt to change their role's tasks and responsibilities so they best align with their desires, skills, and image.

In sum, though bringing closer the effects of leader feedback on role certainty, these select studies leave ample room for research that focuses on leader feedback as a major variable explaining perceived role certainty. Essentially, the bottom line is that leader feedback is a reasonable indication of the extent to which interactions may occur at all between a department chairperson and their dean – a component essential to role certainty.

Finally, how chairs come to perceive themselves within their new role may be affected by appointment related issues (Carroll & Wolverton, 2004). Whether appointed by senior administration or a faculty search committee there remain differing ideas about the types of skills new chairs ought to have. Moreover, the challenging nature of the job's components including departmental representative, communicator and staff developer, organizer, and leader (Benton, Gross, Pallett, Song, & Webster, 2011) demand a set of attributes not typically nurtured in faculty work (Seagren, 1993). As a result, the types of skills appointees emphasize may affect the degree to which new chairs are able to sort out what it means to be a new chair. For example, a

faculty-centered search committee (Carroll, 1991) may emphasize scholarship at the expense of knowing how to build upward influence with the dean (Farmer, Maslyn, Fedor, & Goodman, 1997). On the other hand, an administrative-centered committee may downplay scholarship and invite a rejection of the new chair by the department (Wendling, 1997). Who is doing the selecting of the chair will, despite good intentions, often look to their own interests rather than considering the complexities and vagueness of the job and how that leads to an appointment decision. Even when there exists much information about candidates knowing how they will do as a department chair is an unknown factor (Grigsby, Hefner, Souba, & Kirch, 2004). For these reasons the manner by which a chair is appointed may also be an important factor to consider when thinking about the selection of chairs and how they are to be after assuming the role.

Summary

The purpose of this literature review was to synthesize varying points of view as related to the effects of role certainty, role confidence, personality needs, and role support. In particular, I sought to bring together those points within the context of the department chairperson and show how the variables relate together. Specifically, each chair brings with them previous work experience and personal attributes, which on some level interact with the immediate social system around them, including the dean and department climate. I mentioned that how someone comes to be appointed to the position of new chair may have something to do with role certainty and is a reason for including it. These pieces work together in an effort to challenge higher education to think about the department chair role more as a dynamic one and less as a static profile void of shifting academic priorities. I suggest that what is needed in the higher education literature is discussion about the role certainty of new department chairs specifically in response to daily operations. These discussions invariably raise questions by those seeking to fulfill the

position's demands such as, "What's going on here?" "What can I do about it?" and, "Do I have the latitude to do something about it?" This thinking led to the decision to draw upon Nicholson's work role transition theory (1984) as a means of framing how role confidence, personality needs, and role support predict the role certainty of new department chairs. Finally, it is the case that no study has been done in higher education looking at the relative contribution of these variables to the role certainty of new department chairs.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study proposed that making contributions in one's role is indicative of the

perception one has of the role and suggests the combination of role confidence, select personality

needs, and role support help explain what influences this perception. Though Nicholson's (1984)

work role transition theory is used to assist in explaining what influences role certainty, the

theory alone does not account for how other variables may be a part of the equation. My study

stresses the importance of combining experience and the ability to draw upon it, personal

characteristics, and feedback in explaining the degrees of difference of role certainty among new

department chairs. This thinking led to the following overarching research questions.

1. How well do a new department chair's role confidence, personality needs, and role

    support predict role certainty among new department chairs?

2. What is the relative contribution of each scale to the role certainty of new chairs?

Research Method and Design Appropriateness

This is a quantitative non-experimental study using survey research as the means of data

collection. The central reason for choosing a quantitative study was to examine the robustness,

stability, and general cohesiveness of relationships between select portions of Nicholson's work

role transition theory (1984) i.e., discretion, novelty, need for control, need for feedback, as well

as additional variables supported by theory and research from organizational theory, i.e.,

intolerance for ambiguity, feedback, and department climate. I sought to examine strengths of

association (i.e., direction and strength) between the proposed variables and explain how some

cases vary on some characteristics. While I attempted to locate causes that influence role

certainty, I understand that merely finding two items that go together does not show a causal relationship.

I designed a survey for purposes of generalizing from a sample to a population about the role certainty of new department chairs, to look at variation in specific variables across cases, and to look for other elements connected with it (DeVaus, 2002, p. 5). Also, survey method was employed to collect data on the same variables from many cases and to report on the characteristics of a set of cases.

Population

The population for this study is new department chairs. New department chairs has been defined as those persons who have been in the role between 0 and 3 years; respondents were asked to round up to the nearest year. The choice of 0 is an obvious number representing newness, whereas 3 years of experience warrants further explanation. Three years was chosen as one of the cut off points because the number supports a generally accepted view that comfort in a job only begins to take place in year three. Though this may not be true for all jobs especially ones where repetition is high and therefore role certainty is gained more quickly (e.g., machine line worker, chef, tax preparer), it is true for jobs like the department chair because many tasks are dependent upon the academic calendar year, e.g., budget cycle, class organization. The new department chair does not go through various projects more than once before another academic cycle has taken place. In year one, the person is merely getting by. In year two, the employee is recalling their experience from year one in the hopes of doing better but oftentimes making similar errors. In year three I make the argument the job cycle is performed with a notion of confidence that has not existed before and therefore supports the term, new. Year three is the time when an employee discovers regularity in their awareness to anticipate the tasks demanded

of the job.

Also important to mention about the target population of new department chairs is an attempt to get respondents on the same page about what it means to be a department chair. Common sense suggests wide variations about the understanding of department chair tasks exist between persons. Accordingly, respondents were asked to rate how much each of the following responsibilities was a part of their role as department chair/head: (a) Departmental representative - Promote a positive image and gain financial support for the department; (b) Communication and staff development - Provide feedback to the faculty from the dean and communicate needs of faculty to higher administration; (c) Organizer - Engage in planning, allocating faculty responsibilities, and delegating responsibilities equitably; and (d) Leadership - Stimulate faculty research, teaching, and service, and guide curriculum development (Benton, Gross, Pallett, Song, & Webster, 2010). At the very least respondents' thinking was triggered to presume the provided list of responsibilities was a baseline of department chair tasks and conceivably prompted survey takers' thinking to answer the remaining questions with a common perspective of role. Additionally, while I acknowledge there are variations in how those in different disciplines understand department chair tasks, those differences are not the focus of this study, and are admittedly a limitation.

<center>Sampling Design/Participant Selection</center>

The total number of department chairs in the continental U.S. is unknown. By extension so too is the total number of new department chairs. As a result, the group to be surveyed was figured first from the lens of institutional type, which is known in part because of the definitions provided by The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education.

The institution type chosen was Basic Master's Colleges and Universities, which includes

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institutions awarding at least 50 master's degrees and less than 20 doctoral degrees per year (The Carnegie Foundation, 2010). The rationale used in choosing this type of institution is that it has a recognizable administrative level without being too small (e.g., liberal arts college) or too large (e.g., major research university), thus representing "common" group of institutions. By extension, what I am assuming is that the "look" of the department chair position as middle manager is also "common" among the institutions selected. This list of institutions does not include Tribal Colleges or Special Focus Institutions. The total number of Basic Master's Colleges and Universities is 345. However, it was decided this number was still too unrefined.

The 345 institutions were further refined by selecting only those institutions that were 4-year or above and public. The remaining institutions totaled 166. An additional measure used to try and make common the types of department chairs being examined was the identification of institutions within the pre-defined 166 institutions that had a 0% change in state appropriations and other revenue sources for fiscal year 2009 – 2010 as reported by the "Grapevine" annual survey from Illinois State University and State Higher Education Executive Officers (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2010). This added filter resulted in a total of 76 institutions from across the U.S. The financial piece of this is important as public colleges and universities need to make better decisions right now in lieu of having to do more with less (Boyko, 2009) and suggests that business as "normal" is ongoing despite reductions in governmental revenue streams.

A random number generator was used to produce 20 numbers between 1 and 76. The institutions represented by each of the 20 numbers were called to determine if there would be enough new department chairs to support a survey and in particular, specific analyses. Of the 20 institutions called 8 executive assistants to the provost were able to identify right away the

number of new chairs currently serving. A total of 81 new department chairs were identified with

a phone call over a four-day period. Stevens (2002) suggested having 100 or more subjects is a

large enough sample where the power of tests will not be an issue. As such, this study seemed

feasible with the initial identification of 81 new department chairpersons from 20 institutions, as

well as the fact that some suggest that the number of participants required for a standard multiple

regression analysis is at a minimum five times the number of predictor variables (Brace, Kemp &

Snelgar, 2003). The actual study comprised a census from 76 institutions, which rendered well

over that figure.

Each of the 76 institutions was called with a request for a comprehensive list of current

department chairs. The purpose for the request was explained and contact information was

offered. In most cases the request for this list was asked of the executive assistant to the provost

who was called by using publicly available information on each of the institution's websites. If

this person was unable to help, they transferred me to someone who could. In a couple of cases

the request for a list of department chairs was denied and the institution asked to be removed

from the census list. This was immediately done. For a majority of the institutions I was

redirected to the website to look up each department chair email individually. Most institutional

websites had the predictable navigation elements (e.g., Academic Affairs/College/Department).

The decision was made to not collect the email addresses of directors (e.g., Director of

the Center for Teaching and Learning). Too many questions arose as to what being a director

meant to justify including them on the list. Moreover, there is an assumption made that in order

to be a department chair you must first be a faculty member, whereas this may not be the case for

a director. And, since this study is centered on the transition from faculty member to department

chair not including directors was decided. An additional lesson learned from the manual

collection of emails was to include the term "Interim" and "Acting" in the survey for future research purposes; I did not include them in this study.

Email addresses of department chairs from 64 of the previously identified 76 institutions were collected. The 12 institutions not included in the study were removed from the list due to either a request by the university or due to non-disclosure of email addresses on an institution's website. The emails that were obtained were recorded in an Excel file and stored on a secure password-protected computer in a locked office. The number of participants identified to be surveyed totaled 1,820 (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1.
Breakdown of New Department Chair Sampling Chronology

Description of Eligibility Criteria	N
Total number of persons initially emailed, i.e., census	1,820
Total number of persons who started the survey*	659
Total number of persons who answered at least one question on the survey	607
Total number of persons meeting eligibility criteria for "new department chair"	279
Total number of new chairs with complete data (i.e., no missing values in responses)	238

Individuals who clicked on the emailed link and read at least the first page.

The census of 1,820 persons was recruited through an email invitation to participate in an online questionnaire developed through SurveyMonkey.com. An email was then sent to each of the email addresses from the master call sheet in the late spring of 2011 (see Appendix B). Email addresses were copied into the "Bcc:" field to maintain privacy of other addresses.

After the initial invitation was sent a number of addresses came back as "permanently failed." These emails were taken off the list of emails to be sent with the first reminder. Only one

person sent the initial invitation requested to be taken off the list. Many "out-of-office" replies were also noticed. A few individuals wrote me directly with suggestions for improving the clarity of the data collection. One such suggestion was that the email address I used to send the invitation be a university email (e.g., @msu.edu) and not a @gmail.com address. The reason for the @gmail.com address was purely logistical and allowed me to avoid some of the cumbersome features of the university email system. Since, an initial invitation had already been sent changing the sending email address was considered too risky for consistency of reminders. Even so, the suggestion is a good one. An additional suggestion was made to include some of the IRB information directly in the email and not just on the opening page of the survey (Persons in the study granted their consent by submitting the survey.). This way anyone concerned about the authority of the study would not have to access the study in order to discover permissions from IRB. Though only two individuals out of the 1,820 persons mentioned this, the advice was taken and the subsequent email reminder adjusted accordingly (see Appendix B).

Confidentiality

Respondents of the survey were assured that their information would be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law, and that all of the information recorded from the survey would be kept in confidence. This was done by not tracking names, email addresses, or even IP addresses in the survey. As such the names, email addresses, or computer locations of respondents could not be used in any written records or reports. Moreover, the participation by persons in the study was completely voluntary. At any time during the survey participants could refuse to provide information or discontinue their participation without giving a reason and with no negative consequences. Contact information for The Office of Human Research Protection Program of Michigan State University was also included.

Geographic Location

For purposes of generalizing the study's results to the larger population of new department chairs the census included institutions and participants all across the U.S. All institutions having a 0% change in state appropriations and other revenue sources for fiscal year 2009 – 2010 as reported by the "Grapevine" annual survey from Illinois State University and State Higher Education Executive Officers (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2010) were potentially included in the group. The survey mentioned above is public information and anyone can access the states that would have been considered in the present study.

Instrumentation

The survey instrument was designed primarily to collect data on three categories and their subsequent variables: (a) role confidence (i.e., novelty, discretion) (b) personality needs (i.e., need for control, need for feedback, and intolerance for ambiguity), and (c) role support (leader feedback and department climate). All scales were adapted from prominent studies in the higher education literature, organizational literature, and portions of The IDEA Center's *IDEA Feedback for Chairs System*. Specifically, items 14, 19, 20, 21, 22, and 30 were reprinted in whole or in part with written permission from The IDEA Center (Note: No part of the Center's instrument can be reproduced or used without prior written consent of The IDEA Center.).

Each of the measures used was previously established (e.g., Ashford & Cummings, 1983; West, Nicholson, & Rees, 1987; Benton, Gross, Pallett, Song, & Webster, 2010) as having internal consistency (i.e., reliability). Moreover, nearly all of the scales adapted for the present study are also highlighted in Cook's (1981) seminal and often cited work, *The experience of work: A compendium and review of 249 measures and their use.* The original Likert-type format

of the scales (e.g., Strongly disagree to Strongly agree) was preserved. However, 5-point continuums were newly employed as response options allowing for more nuances among degrees of difference in scores. A description of each variable is discussed next.

Predictor Variables

There are three independent variables in this study: role confidence, personality needs, and role support. Simply put, role confidence refers to the experiences of the individual and the job. The variable personality needs refers to select concepts about a person's psychological attributes related to work. Role support refers to environmental components associated with the job. Within each of those variables are scales, which together make up the totality of the respective predictor variable. The variable role confidence includes the scales novelty and discretion. Personality needs includes the scales need for control, need for feedback, and intolerance for ambiguity. And, role support includes leader feedback and department climate scales.

Role confidence

Role confidence is a person's ability to rely on previous work experience and apply that experience to their present position increasingly over time. Unfolding role confidence into its component parts first gives us novelty. Novelty is one of two components identified by Nicholson (1984) in adjusting to a new role. The novelty of a job is the extent a role allows the use of previous knowledge, abilities and habits. Low novelty occurs when the new role looks identical to the last, whereas, scenarios of high novelty may not have opportunity for the individual to repeat what he or she did previously. The present study assumes that for the department chair, there is little overlap between the role of a faculty member and the role of the department chair either in tasks and functions or in reporting patterns. For example, as a faculty

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member one really does not have a boss to report to on a daily or weekly basis, whereas a new department chair has before them a hierarchical reporting structure.

An additional component of role confidence and one identified by Nicholson (1984) in adjusting to a new role is discretion. Discretion is a "multidimensional construct having as many dimensions as there are elements of a role," and in a word represents the "incumbent's opportunities to alter networks of goals and relationships" (p. 177-78). Different levels of discretion require different ways of adjusting. For example, Nicholson proposes high-discretion roles such as owner/presidents of entrepreneurial companies make conforming to a specific job description, or the performance of individuals who came before you unrealistic. Conversely, low discretion roles like "machine-paced operations, allow little latitude for the new operator to change the work" (p. 178). This study proposes the position of department chair is one of high discretion because of the ambiguity of the role's chief objectives, which while sometimes explicitly laid out in formal job descriptions, are never fully realized by newcomers until the individual begins the actual work of the position. Discretion is then critical for the purposes of thinking about the role certainty of new department chairs.

Though Nicholson's research on work role transition theory (1984) included novelty and discretion, time was not a part of his work. Nicholson's theory does not address the time it takes individuals to test perceptions and build a "perceptual framework." This seems key to understanding how persons adjust to work role changes if it is true that only after a person's perceptions are exaggerated do they really learn (1984). Responding to Nicholson's point, this study limited the sample of participants to new chairs (i.e., 0-3 years) setting up an assumption going into data collection that "perceptual frameworks," or at least the foundations of those frameworks, are created within 3 years of entering the new chair role. By doing so, this study

affirms the generally accepted view that during the first year a department chair is just trying to make it through one full cycle of events, e.g., budget cycle. In year two the department chair tries to do better than they did the first year, and in year three it is arguable the department chair has only established some routines and can predict most of what the job entails. Thus, time in the role matters if for no other reason than to provide a means by which individuals test their perceptions to see whether or not they are exaggerated.

Personality needs

The second in the set of three independent variables in this study, personality needs, is defined as an individual's requirement for regulating the clarity of task-related knowledge as it applies to the role. The scales for personality needs include intolerance for ambiguity, need for control, and need for feedback.

Nicholson (1984) suggests one's need for control influences whether a person adjusts the job to meet their own needs, or a person adjusts themselves to the requirements of the job. One's need for control is a critical aspect in this study's model because people make up organizations (Schneider, 1987) and bring to their jobs individual differences, which ultimately affect their development. Utilizing a person's need for control allows the present study to challenge the commonly accepted view that more feedback should increase subordinates' confidence in performing their role. Deci (1972) put forth that the need for personal control is a requirement for self-motivation. If this is true, then frequent feedback given to individuals with a high need for control results in a diminishing return to the clarity of role certainty because self-motivation has been replaced. In fact, Ilgen, Fisher, and Taylor (1979) argue that not only does more frequent feedback given to a subordinate with a high need for control fail to result in better performance, but in reality may be harmful to it.

Second, need for feedback is included not only as a check against the scale leader feedback, but also to discover if Katz's notion (1985) that new employees rely on leader feedback to mitigate doubt about their own effectiveness applies to new department chairs.

Third in the list of scales for personality needs is intolerance for ambiguity. At one level establishing both the need for control as well as the need for feedback implies an individual cannot handle uncertainty. But, the question emerges, at what level and under what conditions does this uncertainty become controlled? In other words, how much intolerance do new department chairs have for ambiguity? For this reason a measure is included in the instrument.

Role support

The last variable to make up the list of independent variables is role support. Role support is defined as the availability of performance-related assistance cues to employees from one's direct supervisor and the daily work environment. The construct role support is comprised of the scales leader feedback and department climate.

As previously mentioned, Katz (1980) suggested that the newcomer increases certainty by establishing patterns of communication and regular interactions with others. This information gathering is primarily bound up in the source of a newcomer's immediate supervisor whose approval it is they are ultimately trying to win. For this reason leader feedback is claimed to influence the role certainty of the new department chair. A point mentioned earlier that needs emphasis here is that Nicholson's work role transition theory looked to operationalize a "person's subjective perceptions of job requirements" (1984, p. 179). Katz (1980, p. 97) argues this operationalization is because new employees require information as they construct "perceptual frameworks" (p. 97) about their new work environment and personal selves. Other scholars

argue that individuals do not react apart from other persons and organizational influences, which more often than not have a prominent affect on how someone comes to see a job and how one responds to the position (Louis, 1980; McCall & Simmons, 1978). Additionally, while coworkers are traditionally seen as important sources of information for newcomers, supervisors are identified more quickly as critical because new employees have to win their approval for role negotiation (Graen, 1976; Jablin, 1979). Within the higher education context the dean is a supervisor from which new department chairs can receive feedback. And, because the dean-department chair pairing is a relationship between two people *opportunities* for information flow are established. What is assumed in this study is that the quality of feedback may be an outcome of the amount offered by deans, but is not a guaranteed outcome. This study accepts the premise behind Miller and Jablin's (1991) work that individuals have multiple ways of seeking out information, but is focused on leader feedback as a scale having direct influence on the role certainty of new department chairs.

Department climate is the second scale proposed to make up role support. The word climate refers to a group of characteristics that can be gleaned about an organization and its component parts, which may be perceived from the way the organization treats their employees and the environment of employment (Hellrigel & Slocum, 1974). Including department climate as part of the model makes sense because a department chair does not work in a vacuum separated from others and the surrounding environment. Specifically, the measure calls for the department chair's "cognitively based description of the situation" (Jones & James, 1979, p. 205) as it relates to the group with whom he or she works. Additionally, by adding the department climate I am addressing Nicholson's (1984) shortfall of leaving out context from his research.

<center>Dependent Variable</center>

Role certainty

The dependent variable for this study is role certainty, which is defined as a firm conviction that one's belief about a role is true. Role certainty is made up of three scales: role development, role ambiguity, and role self-efficacy.

Role development from Nicholson's work role transition theory (1984) is about adjusting the job requirements to suit one's wants, skills and identity. In role development someone may introduce adjustments to systems of tasks and responsibilities, procedures, resources, scheduling, and other characteristics connected to relationships critical for performance effectiveness. At this point some may suggest role development can be measured solely through effectiveness outcomes and conclude this is where the emphasis really should begin and focus. Although examples of effectiveness ratings and measurements like the results of the decade-long program of research on leadership behavior by the Personnel Research Board at Ohio State University can be valuable, such tools may not capture "behaviors inherent to a particular circumstance" and exclude "significant leadership behavior" (Amey, 1989, p. 21). Despite this wisdom some still view prescribed instruments as "key" to any professional development for effectiveness (Knight & Holen, 1985). On the other hand making a connection to judgments of performance effectiveness by looking not at the level of effectiveness in carrying out the prescribed list of tasks, but at factors that influence at what level of quality the tasks are completed is ultimately more helpful. Although implications for training from effectiveness research may advance leadership towards better performance useful to the future of departments and their institutions (e.g., American Council on Education Department Leadership Programs), looking only at performance output qualified as effective or not is still too near-sighted. Essentially, seeing

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through this lens only catches the immediate foreground of proactive behaviors and not the possible items influencing such behaviors. Thus, because effectiveness describes performance, studying it in isolation fails to help us understand how individuals respond to situations. With this in mind, this study is not about the effectiveness of the role per se (see Caroll & Gmelch, 1992; Hoyt and Spangler, 1978; Knight & Holen, 1985; McDaniel, 2002; Middendorf, 2009; Smith & Wolverton, 2010; Spendlove, 2007; Williams, 2007); rather, it is about those factors that influence the role certainty of new department chairs, of which, role development is one.

Role ambiguity is also an important factor to consider when talking about new department chairs because the higher the role ambiguity, the less the person is able to anticipate the outcome of different actions and the less the individual is sure of drawing on previous experience or nurturing new behaviors (Harvey1982; Misa & Fabricatore, 1979; Pinder & Schroeder, 1987). Moreover, research has found that facing uncertainty about one's position causes anxiety and tension (Ashford & Cummings, 1985) leading to poor performance and a host of other outcomes like stress, intent to leave, and job dissatisfaction (Cicero, 2010). As a result role ambiguity makes up the second dependent variable under the umbrella term role certainty.

Role self-efficacy makes up the third and final scale of the dependent variable in the proposed model of role certainty for new department chairpersons. Bauer et al. (2007) has defined the term as "Learning the tasks of the new job and gaining confidence in the role" (p. 708). He goes on to say that individuals who are confident in the tasks required of the new job will find greater fulfillment, become loyal to the organization, and be less willing to find work elsewhere. What affects self-efficacy in the new department chair becomes an important aspect to understand since research has found a link between it and the behaviors of individuals in their work (Crant, 2000). Other research has shown a link between self-efficacy and newcomer

adjustment in the role (Fenner & Selmer, 2008) finding that positive self-efficacy will lead to "positive choices," "motivational effort," and "perseverance" (Luthans, 2002, p. 60) in the job.

The variables of role development, role ambiguity, and role self-efficacy are argued here to comprise what shapes a firm conviction about what is true of the role of the department chair. Their inclusion in the model is because of their direct effects on the dependent variable (Pedhazur & Schmelkin, 1991).

<div align="center">Validity</div>

To investigate the validity of the instrument I looked for evidence of both face validity and content validity.

Face validity is claimed based upon the feedback from respondents of the pilot questionnaire. Before sending out the final survey, a pilot was administered to a convenience sample of department chairs in early spring 2011. The sample for the pilot survey was put together with the help of a nationally recognized association that maintains a network of department chairs. An invitation was sent out on my behalf to a listserv requesting a general call for participants. Sixty-four individuals responded directly to me and served as the sample for the pilot study. As a result of their feedback several questions were revised for clarity and one question fixed for a missing demographic component. On the whole respondents were favorable towards the direction of the questions and expressed appreciation for the value of the research being conducted.

Content validity is claimed first because of the clarification in question 14 of what is meant by the department chair role. This clarification is important for orienting the reader on how the study is viewing the department chair role. The questionnaire asks persons to rate how much the listed statements are a part of their role as department chair, thereby, either confirming

their own perspectives of the job before proceeding with the survey, or reorienting their mindset to a picture of how the study is viewing the role of department chair.

Additionally, content validity exists because the content in each of the four variables or constructs (i.e., role confidence, personality needs, role support, and role certainty) has been specified through the scales to represent "the full content" (Neuman, 2011, p. 212) of the definition of each of the four variables provided in the study. For example, in the independent variable of role confidence the idea of the experience an employee brings to the work role is captured from the items listed under the novelty scale – a scale of the construct role confidence. The items listed in the novelty question ask persons to rate the differences between their present and previous jobs in relation to the tasks involved, the skills required for the job, and the methods used to do the job. Similarly, the items listed under discretion and time in role together form a clear concept of the idea of role confidence and when combined with novelty make a case for content validity.

<center>Data Collection</center>

The data were collected via a questionnaire designed by the author and housed on SurveyMonkey.com. The website (i.e., SurveyMonkey.com) housed the instrument, provided the link to the actual survey, and stored all responses under a secured account, which was password protected. The data collection period ran from the beginning of May 2011 through the end of the same month. The invitation was sent May 5, 2011, a reminder was sent the following week on May 12, 2011, and the final reminder to take the survey was sent on May 25, 2011. The survey was officially closed on May 31, 2011.

The primary method of data collection was a census. Every department chair of the identified institutions was asked to participate in this study. The reason for this was because there

was no database at the time of this research and/or available to the public listing new department chairs. As a result, a census of the 64 institutions was taken in the hopes of qualifying through the first few questions on the survey those for whom I wished to collect data. Ideally, the provost offices contacted would have provided a comprehensive list of new department chairs, however, this proved impossible for a number of reasons that included both a lack of knowledge about who was a new department chair and about who was a department chair at all. As a result, a certain amount of caution should be taken when generalizing the findings of this study to the whole of new department chairs within comprehensive regional universities (i.e., Basic Master's Colleges and Universities).

<div align="center">Scale construction: Principal Components Analysis</div>

I used a principal components analysis (PCA) with Varimax rotation using the 29 role certainty items to create scales. The nine-component solution explained a total of 70.9% of the variance with both Components 1 and 2 contributing the most with 15.1% and 13.6% respectively. The rotated solution showed very little ambiguity in the components, i.e., no item loaded highly on more than one component. I used these results to form 9 scales, all but one with multiple measures (one scale—opportunity for feedback—contained one item). I created the scales by using unit weights, i.e., adding together the responses to items that loaded significantly (loading > .5) on a component. For example, component 2 included 5 items, each with a possible value of 1-5. The scale combining these items then had a range of 5 to 25.

These scales included (sorted by size): (1) department climate (Items 10.a, 10.d., 10.e, 10.c, 10.b), (2) intolerance for ambiguity (Items 24.b, 24.c, 24.e, 24.f, 24.a), (3) discretion (Items 16.b, 16.c, 16.a, 16.d), (4) novelty (Items 17.b, 17.a, 17.c), (5) need for control over department performance (Items 18.d, 18.c), (6) need for control over own tasks (Items 18.a, 18.b), (7) leader

feedback (Items 27.a, 28), (8) indirect feedback (Items 27.c, 27.d), and (9) opportunity for

feedback (Item 23) (see Appendix A). Each scale has good internal consistency as measured by

Cronbach's alpha. Figure 4.1 represents the revised model of factors influencing the role

certainty of new department chairs as a result of the PCA. Table 3.2 displays the rotated loadings

for a nine-component solution, as well as the Cronbach's alpha for each and Pearson product-

moment correlation coefficient where two items are present.

Figure 3.1
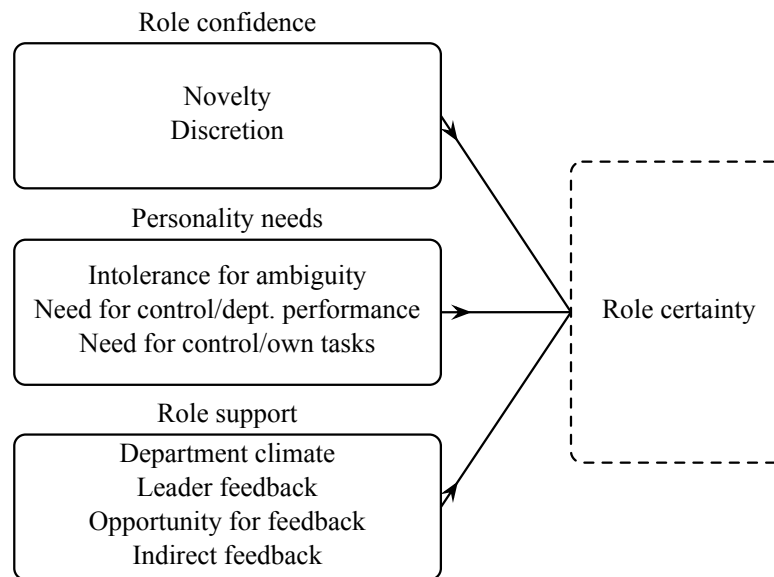*Revised Model of Factors Influencing Role Certainty of New Department Chairs*

Role confidence

| Novelty |
| Discretion |

Personality needs

| Intolerance for ambiguity |
| Need for control/dept. performance |
| Need for control/own tasks |

Role support

| Department climate |
| Leader feedback |
| Opportunity for feedback |
| Indirect feedback |

Role certainty

Table 3.2

Summary of Items, Reliability, and Factor Loadings (n = 238)

				Rotated Factor Loadings					
				Scale*					
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Item	(α=.89)	(α=.76)	(α=.75)	(α=.82)	(r=.69)	(r=.63)	(r=.45)	(r=.37)	
10.a. My department is an atmosphere in which there is cooperative effort among individuals to carry out difficult tasks.	**.904**	.018	.073	.055	-.032	.161	.008	.047	.015
10.d. Within my department there is open communication and trust among faculty and staff and the atmosphere is characterized by friendly relations.	**.885**	-.004	.027	-.007	-.087	.155	-.036	.021	-.033
10.e. Within my department individuals feel the atmosphere is conducive to the expression of individual opinions, ideas, and suggestions.	**.861**	-.025	-.004	-.096	-.006	.098	-.025	.045	-.027
10.c. The faculty who comprise my department take pride in the department.	**.796**	-.028	.122	.076	.054	-.109	.030	-.111	.040
10.b. My department is seen as able to produce work of higher quality and quantity than other groups in the institution.	**.692**	-.081	-.047	-.081	.093	-.195	-.052	-.108	.206
24.b. I don't like to work on a problem unless there is a possibility of coming out with a clear-cut and unambiguous answer.	.035	**.790**	.067	-.026	-.027	.005	.010	.075	-.062
24.c. I function very poorly whenever there is a serious lack of communication in a job situation.	-.051	**.741**	.078	-.061	.088	.083	.020	-.071	-.030
24.e. If I am uncertain about the responsibility of my role, I get very anxious.	.095	**.696**	.079	.055	.081	.034	-.056	-.282	.037

Table 3.2 (cont'd)

24.f. A problem has little attraction for me if I don't think it has a solution.	-.076	**.663**	.183	.158	.110	-.147	.037	.096	.138
24.a. In a decision-making situation in which there is not enough information to process the problem, I feel very uncomfortable.	-.131	**.631**	-.044	.101	-.104	.238	.017	-.147	-.029
16.b. Freedom to set my own work objectives/targets	.043	.112	**.830**	.027	.002	.170	.048	.035	.157
16.c. Freedom to prioritize when different parts of the role are done	.037	.089	**.762**	.224	.084	-.074	.114	-.054	-.099
16.a. Freedom to act independently of my immediate supervisor	.011	.086	**.704**	.011	-.233	.139	-.102	.015	.300
16.d. Freedom to choose whom I deal with in order to carry out departmental work	.111	.098	**.662**	.093	.207	.011	.083	.085	-.340
17.b. The skills required for the job	-.013	.065	.072	**.860**	.110	.051	.011	-.008	-.010
17.a. The tasks involved	-.033	.032	.070	**.841**	-.042	.116	-.027	-.010	-.050
17.c. The methods used to do the job	.006	.038	.123	**.840**	.003	-.031	.031	-.006	.066
18.d. Performance standards in the department	.024	.042	.013	.062	**.845**	.192	.036	.026	.029
18.c. The quality of the faculty's work	-.036	.076	.030	-.007	**.835**	.295	-.069	.036	.091
18.a. The variety of tasks performed	.085	.077	.173	.047	.236	**.811**	.004	.021	-.001
18.b. Decisions as to when things will be done in the department	.060	.102	.031	.110	.370	**.748**	.070	-.038	-.034
27.a. Ask the [immediate supervisor]	-.111	-.053	.036	-.043	-.040	.108	**.860**	.087	-.110
28. To what extent do you find out from the [supervisor] how you are doing on the job?	.072	.105	.103	.081	.029	-.067	**.783**	-.015	.378

Table 3.2 (cont'd)

27.c. Compare yourself with others	.002	-.116	-.058	.052	-.065	.040	-.115	**.822**	.189
27.d. Observe the characteristics of those praised by the [immediate supervisor]	-.082	-.110	.123	-.080	.145	-.055	.230	**.759**	-.098
23. How much opportunity exists to find out how well you are doing in your job?	.126	.007	.051	.005	.118	-.023	.118	.094	**.822**

Note: Boldface indicates highest factor loadings.
*Scales: (1) Department climate, (2) Intolerance for ambiguity, (3) Discretion, (4) Novelty, (5) Need for control over department performance, (6) Need for control over own tasks, (7) Leader feedback, (8) Indirect feedback, (9) Opportunity for feedback

Predictor Scales

Discretion (Items 16.a, b, c, d). Originally called "Job discretion" the scale used for this study is a 4-item, 5-point continuum response scale developed by West, Nicholson, and Rees (1987) ($\alpha = .92$). The scale was utilized primarily because of the importance it holds in Nicholson's work role transition theory (1984). Questionnaire respondents were asked to remark on whether their current roles offered "Hardly Any" through "A Good Amount" of freedom (i.e., discretion) than the roles they had before. The following prompts for respondents were used on the questionnaire: (a) Freedom to act independently of my immediate supervisor, (b) Freedom to set my own work objectives/targets, (c) Freedom to prioritize when different parts of the role are done, and (d) Freedom to choose whom I deal with in order to carry out departmental work.

Novelty (Items 17.a, b, c). Originally called "Job novelty" the scale used was also derived from West, Nicholson, and Rees (1987). The 3-item, 5-point continuum response scale (i.e., "Completely Different" through "The Same") consists of prompts in response to the question, "How would you rate the differences between your present and previous jobs in relation to the following areas." Both of the discretion and novelty scales were utilized from West, Nicholson, and Rees (1987) because of good levels of reliability reported and because these scales are directly associated with the subsequent studies utilizing Nicholson's work role transition theory (1984) that was used in this study (cf. Ashforth 1995; Black 1988; Black 1995; Nicholson 1984; West 1989; West 1987). Previous research shows the scale to have good internal consistency (cf., West, Nicholson, and Rees, 1987; ($\alpha = .92$)) an aspect maintained in this study ($\alpha = .75$).

Intolerance for ambiguity (Items 24.a, b, c, e, f). The scale measuring intolerance for ambiguity looked at an individual's ability to live with a level of open-endedness with their work. More particularly, individuals were asked the degree to which they required assurances of

success and definitive answers to problems connected to the job. Ashford and Cummings' (1985) own sense was that those people with intolerance for ambiguity will pursue more strongly feedback and information regarding their ambiguous roles or situations. The scale required participants' to rate on a Likert continuum (1= "Strongly disagree" through 5= "Strongly agree") the following items: (a) In a decision making situation in which there is not enough information to process the problem, I feel very uncomfortable; (b) I don't like to work on a problem unless there is a possibility of coming out with a clear cut and unambiguous answer; (c) I function very poorly whenever there is a serious lack of communication in a job situation; (d) In a situation in which other people evaluate me, I feel a great need for clear and explicit evaluations; (e) If I am uncertain about the responsibility of my role, I get very anxious; and (f) A problem has little attraction for me if I don't think it has a solution. After doing a principal components analysis (PCA) item (d) was left off. The scale has better internal consistency (α=.76) than Norton's (1975) original scale (α = .69).

Need for control over department performance (Items 18. c, d). After the PCA was run the original "Need for control" (Greenberger, 1982) scale was broken out into two separate scales. The "Need for control over department performance" was one of them – a 2-item, 5-point continuum response scale. The scale includes two items in response to the question, "How much control do you desire in the following work areas (1 = "Very little" through 5 = "Very much"): (a) Performance standards in the department, and (b) The quality of the faculty's work." Research indicates that when control over one's tasks is perceived to be reduced people react poorly to stress (Greenberger, 1989). As such, and given the stress already involved with the complexities of "living" between colleagues and senior administration (Jaeger & Pekruhl, 1998; Uyterhoeven, 1989), the measure was deemed a possible indicator of role certainty. The strength

of association between the scale and role certainty was large ($r = .69$) (Cohen, 1988).

Need for control over own tasks (Items 18.a, b). The second scale derived from the original "Need for control" scale was, "Need for control over own tasks" (1 = "Very little" through 5 = "Very much") and included two items for participant response: (a) The variety of tasks performed, and (b) Decisions as to when things will be done in the department. The strength of association between the scale and role certainty was large ($r = .63$) (Cohen, 1988).

Department climate (Items 10.a, b, c, d, e). The items comprising the department climate scale included statements relative to the perception of a new chair's context derived from Jones and James' (1979) "Psychological Climate: Dimensions and Relationships of Individual and Aggregated Work Environment Perceptions." In particular participants are asked to rate (1 = "Strongly agree" through 5 = "Strongly disagree") the following items: (a) My department is an atmosphere in which there is cooperative effort among individuals to carry out difficult tasks; (b) My department is seen as able to produce work of higher quality and quantity than other groups in the institution; (c) The faculty who comprise my department take pride in the department; (d) Within my department there is open communication and trust among faculty and staff and the atmosphere is characterized by friendly relations; and (e) Within my department individuals feel the atmosphere is conducive to the expression of individual opinions, ideas, and suggestions. The scale measures work group climate and was adapted for the context of the department and higher education institution. The scale is important for two reasons. One, to establish the new chair's cognitive observation of their situation and two, to add the notion of context to Nicholson's (1984) work role transition theory – a theory largely drawn upon for the present study. Though some will argue the scale is made weaker because it mixes both climate and communication statements – a practice used in early organizational communication research – the scale shows

good internal consistency (α=.89) and serves the purposes of this study. Moreover, the author of the present study views the scale as measuring more broadly the departmental life from the chair's perspective. Doing so moves the rating toward a more general outlook than a snapshot designed to support the specifics of either organization climate or culture.

Leader feedback (Items 27.a and 28). The leader feedback scale included here is also the result of PCA. In particular, items 27.a ("How frequently do you use the following strategies of feedback: (a) Ask the [Q25]" where Q25 is the immediate supervisor) and 28 ("To what extent do you find out from the [Q25] how you are doing on the job as you are working?) make up the scale. New chairs experience the reality of having to report to the dean on a regular basis. This newfound difference necessitates discovering to what extent the relationship produces feedback. Extant research suggests that newcomers view their supervisor as critical for information gathering (Graen, 1976; Jablin, 1979). For this reason, the scale is meant to provide a large contribution to the role certainty of new chairs. The strength of association between the scale and role certainty was moderate ($r = .45$) (Cohen, 1988).

Opportunity for feedback (Item 23). The opportunity for feedback scale was included because the dean-department chair pairing is an opportunity for both parties to create information flow. The quality of feedback may be an outcome of the amount offered by deans, but is not a guarantee. Participants were asked to respond to the question, "How much opportunity exists to find out how well you are doing in your job?" The scale was intended to do little more than understand frequency of contact related to job feedback (Lurie & Swaminathan, 2009).

Indirect feedback (Items 27.c, d). The two items making up the indirect feedback scale are 27.c "How frequently do you use the following strategies of feedback: (a) Compare yourself with others, and (b) Observe the characteristics of those praised by [Q25]" where Q25 is the

immediate supervisor. The indirect feedback scale is also the result of PCA. Reasons for including it are based upon the theory and research finding that newcomers seek information through indirect means more often than in direct ways (cf., Ashford & Tsui, 1991; Miller & Jablin, 1991; Morrison, 1993). The strength of association between the scale and role certainty was moderate ($r = .37$) (Cohen, 1988).

Career aspirations (Item 31). The career aspirations scale includes those who have a desire to pursue further administration and those who wish to return to faculty work. A medium strong positive correlation of .30 (p < .01) existed between role certainty and career aspirations suggesting there was some relationship worth exploring.

Mode of entry (Item 9). The mode of entry scale includes persons who were either appointed by senior leadership or those who were elected by faculty. The nature of how a chair is appointed becomes important to consider when thinking about how the faculty within a department may respond to their new leadership. The scale is primarily descriptive in nature and meant to provide an account of how new chairs came to their new role.

Dependent variable

Role Certainty (Items 5, 6, 7, 8). The scale used for role certainty is a sum of three other separate scales. The details of each follow. Originally called, "job change" (Jones, 1986), the role development scale (Item 5) is a 4-item, 5point continuum response scale (i.e., "Strongly Agree" through "Strongly Agree"). It measures the extent to which the respondent re-defined the role, altered procedures, instituted new work goals, and changed the mission of the role. Black and Ashford (1995) reported a Cronbach alpha of .90 indicating good internal consistency. Role ambiguity (Item 6) is a 6-item, 5-point scale ("Strongly Disagree" through "Strongly Agree"). The role ambiguity scale comes from role theory and from classical organization theory and

subscribes to the idea that formal positions in an organization ought to have clear expectations of tasks and responsibilities (Cook, 1981, p. 199). The measure seeks to address the extent to which a task is unclear in demands, criteria, or relationships with other tasks (Jones & James, 1979). Adapted from Jones' (1986) scale role self-efficacy (Items 7, 8) – 8-item, 5-point ("Strongly Disagree" through "Strongly Agree") – measures individuals' assumptions that they are capable of performing the duties asked of them. Examples include, "My new job is well within the scope of my abilities," and "I do not anticipate any problems in adjusting to work in this department." Bauer suggested role self-efficacy is about gaining an understanding of the tasks in the role and growing in confidence respectively (2007).

Other data collected includes: demographic information (Items 15, 34, 35, 36, and 37), length of time in roles (Items 4, 26, and 33), size of departments (Item 13), disciplines represented (Item 11), colleges represented (Item 12), rating of supervisor (Item 29), career aspirations (Item 31), historical experience (Items 32 and 33), and greatest challenges (Item 30) (see Appendix A).

<div align="center">Data Analysis</div>

I used SPSS Version 20 software to analyze the data. Before describing the relationships between the independent and dependent variables, I first ran an analysis using univariate statistics such as frequency distributions, means, and standard deviations (see Chapter 4). Next, I employed standard multiple regression to describe the relationships between variables because it allowed a "more sophisticated exploration of the interrelationship among a set of variables" beyond just correlations (Pallant, 2007, p. 146). Moreover, the regression model permitted contrasts to be made between criterion and predictor variables. Likewise, standard multiple regression allowed me to see if adding a variable helped with the predictability of the model

(2007) separate from the independent variables already provided. This method also showed how much unique variance in the dependent variable (i.e., role certainty) each of the independent variables explained. Standard multiple regression was chosen over hierarchical regression because the author believes, based upon theory and research, each of the variables proposed has equivalent influence on the outcome of role certainty.

The author recognizes the assumptions necessary for doing standard multiple regression and puts forth that all necessary conditions were met before proceeding with the statistical procedure. These conditions included, but were not limited to, finding strong correlations between the independent and dependent variables, as well as collecting a large number of responses. The author accepts that a low response rate might be made worse by the reality department chairs receive many requests to fill out surveys. However, because this study is asking for data from new department chairs about their role the results are believed to be of interest to respondents and therefore act as motivation for filling out the questionnaire.

After the data were cleaned for outliers, scatterplots were used (see Chapter 4) to explore and verify that the relationships between the variables for the study were linear (i.e., the scatterplot shows randomness in its scatter and the plot was not a u-shape – curvilinear) and collate the information using Pearson's correlation coefficient to make sure there was at least some relationship of the independent variables with role certainty (i.e., $r = .3$ and above) (Pallant, 2007; Pedhazur & Schmelkin, 1991). Additional checks were made to exclude independent variables highly correlated with one another (i.e., $r = .9$ and above) (Ott & Longnecker, 2008) though this was unlikely given previous studies. No moderate (i.e., +0.5 or -0.5) or strong association(s) (i.e., close to or beyond 0.7 or -0.7) were found between each of the independent variables and the dependent variable. As such multiple regression analysis was done to help

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explain how well role confidence, personality needs, and role support were able as a group to explain the variance of role certainty among new department chairs. The assumption made was that there are differing degrees of role certainty for individuals, an intuitive conclusion not needing a separate study.

Limitations

One of the restrictive limitations of this study is the fact that survey research is both broad and shallow, leaving out the understandings and experiences of new department chairs' sense of their role. The identified group of individuals is also dependent upon the accuracy of institutional website records of current department chairs increasing the likelihood of coverage error and non-response error. Also, this study is not about performance effectiveness of new chairs (see Caroll & Gmelch, 1992; Hoyt and Spangler, 1978; Knight & Holen, 1985; McDaniel, 2002; Middendorf, 2009; Smith & Wolverton, 2010; Spendlove, 2007; Williams, 2007). As a result, other possible contextual variables may influence role certainty and may not be accounted for. Additional limitations include not addressing empirically whether the notion of transitioning to the department chair from faculty ranks is becoming problematic in some institutions. My own position was that there exist inherent problems when transitioning from faculty member to a department chair. Even so, thinking there is a problem to begin with may distort any conclusions made from the data. Also, including only self-reports implies the possibility of common method variance (Pedhazur & Schmelkin, 1991) and raises the question whether those who took the survey were actually department chairs at all. Additionally, I could not control for the fact that survey takers "tend to give socially desirable answers" (Smith & Wolverton, 2010, p. 68), which brings to mind the correctness of respondents' perceptions and their desire to respond without qualifications.

Summary

In this chapter I detailed research method and design appropriateness. I described the design, the independent and dependent variables, as well as the rationale of the research design. Additionally, the population, sampling design, and participant selection, as well as procedures for data collection were covered. The specifics of the instrument were addressed including validity and reliability of previously used scales. Limitations of the present study were also included. Finally, the plan for data analysis was laid out in full.

In chapter 4 I present the findings of the data analysis explaining the relationships between the independent and dependent variables. In chapter 5 I discuss the results, implications of the study, and recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This chapter provides the results of the data analysis outlined in the previous chapter. Specifically, I detail the relative importance of role confidence, personality needs, and role support in explaining the differences in perception of new department chairs' role certainty. The chapter is organized into two sections. The first is the demographics of the survey respondents. Next, the output of a standard multiple regression analysis is presented and interpreted in answer to the main and subsequent research questions. The findings are discussed in the order of the research questions asked. Tables, figures, and charts are supplied when appropriate.

Description of the Participant Sample Used

Because the number of new chairs in the U.S. is unknown a census of all department chairs was conducted from a previously identified group of institutions. The data to be discussed are derived from the 1,820 total number of department chairs invited to take the survey (see Table 4.1). This number was achieved from filters applied to the 345 Basic Master's Colleges and Universities distinguished by The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. These institutions were selected because they have a recognizable administrative level without being too small (e.g., liberal arts college), or too large (e.g., major research university), thus representing a type of "common" group of institutions. Filters were applied to this group to try and make common the types of department chairs being studied. These filters included isolating 4-year or above and public institutions, as well as institutions having a 0% change in state appropriations and other revenue sources for fiscal year 2009 – 2010 as reported by the "Grapevine" annual survey from Illinois State University and State Higher Education Executive Officers (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2010).

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Descriptive Statistics

Demographic Data

The following is a description of the demographic data collected from the participant

sample. Details are broken into two broad categories: (a) structural demographics, and (b) profile

demographics, which are simply the "look" of the respondents from the survey related to the role

of department chair. Structural demographics cover gender, ethnicity, race, geographic regions

represented, as well as the total number of regular (i.e., full-time and tenure-track) faculty

members in the department.

Three qualifying questions were asked at the beginning of the survey to ensure the data

collected were from a group of new department chairs, as opposed to more experienced

department chairs (see Table 4.1). Out of the 659 people who began the survey – a response rate

of 36.2% – 176 of them had previously served as department chair at their present institution

thereby disqualifying them from the survey and leaving 478 respondents. This remaining group

then answered whether or not they were presently serving as department chair at their current

institution further eliminating eleven persons and leaving 467 in the pool. One final question

made sure those participating were new department chairs. Of the 467 who remained in the pool

after the first two qualifying questions only 456 answered the final qualifying question, "How

long have you served in your current position (please round to the nearest year)?" Of this group

38.8% (n = 177) were further disqualified from the survey because they were not considered to

be new chairs, which was defined for the present study as someone with zero through three years

of new department chair experience. This left 279 new department chairs as qualified to take the

survey. Data were cleaned to remove those cases containing a high number of missing values

among their answers. The removal of these cases ensured a complete set of data totaling 85.3%

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(n = 238) of the original 279 participants. The remaining descriptions are based upon this group.

A breakdown of the structural demographics of this group is provided next.

Table 4.1.
Breakdown of New Department Chair Sampling Chronology

Description of Eligibility Criteria	n
Total number of persons initially emailed, i.e., census	1,820
Total number of persons who started the survey*	659
Total number of persons who answered at least one question on the survey	607
Total number of persons meeting eligibility criteria for "new department chair"	279
Total number of new chairs with complete data (i.e., no missing values in responses)	238

Individuals who clicked on the emailed link and read at least the first page.

Structural demographics. Department chairs with two years experience were the most representative of the group (32.8%, n = 78) with those having three years experience following (29.0%, n = 69). Those with one-year experience comprised 20.6% of the group (n = 49) and those with less than one-year experience made up 17.6% of the group (n = 42). The percentage of interim/acting chairs was 38.7% (n = 92) and the percentage of the group identifying as associate/co-chairs came to 3.4% (n = 8).

Of the 234 who answered the gender question, 60.1% (n = 143) were male and 38.2% (n = 91) female. Those persons identifying themselves as Hispanic or Latino was 6.3% (n = 15) of the respondents, leaving 86.6% (n = 206) answering Not Hispanic or Latino. Table 4.2 gives an account of persons indicating identification with one or more race group(s). Tables are offered for purposes of efficiency and more specifically when the data could comprise two or more columns and rows.

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Table 4.2.

Number of Persons Identifying with One or More Race Groups (n =238)

Race Group	n	% of Group
American Indian or Alaska Native	8	3.4
Asian	6	3.0
Black or African American	11	4.6
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	2	0.8
White	202	84.9
More than One	4	1.7
Missing	5	2.1

Most of the respondents came from the Northeast region of the U.S. (32.8%, n = 78). Participants from the South region came next providing 25.2% of the response (n = 60). People from the Midwest region totaled 22.7% (n = 54) of the responses and 19.3% (n = 46) of answers came from individuals in the West region.

The total number of regular (full-time, tenure track) faculty members in the departments represented was broken down into four groups: (a) 1 – 10, (b) 11 – 20 (c) 21 – 30, (d) 31 – 40, (e) 41 – 50 (see Figure 4.1). Departments having between 11 and 20 faculty were the most typical. Between 1 and 10 was the next largest with between 21 and 30 the next. One department reported having between 41 and 50 people.

Profile demographics. Profile demographics consist of four subsections. Chair snapshot is the first and the most detailed, encompassing position/title held before present job, length of service in previous position, mode of entry, and highest degrees held. Chair performance tasks are the second of the profile demographics and involve agreement with listed responsibilities of

role, and self-report ratings on a chair's own effectiveness. Structural picture is the third of the profile demographics and accounts for reporting relationship, length of time supervisor has had the position, and overall performance rating of the supervisor. Future glance is the last and fourth subsection of profile demographics and takes in greatest challenges and career aspirations.

Figure 4.1.
Total Number of Departments and the Total Number of Regular Faculty within those Departments (Full-time and Tenure Track) (n = 232; Missing, n = 6)
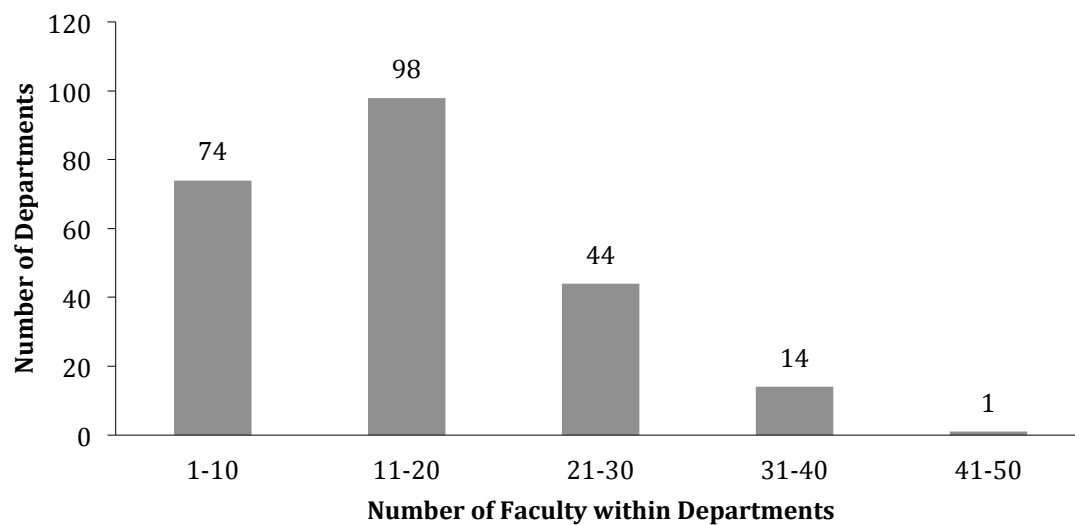
The "look" of the average department chair from the sample was found to be largely similar and uniform. Most of the chairs in the group came from faculty ranks (79.0%, n = 188) and served in their previous role as faculty member between 0 and 10 years (70.0%, n = 160). Other groups represented in the sample include in ascending order: director or coordinator of programs (7.6%, n = 18); former deans be they associate or full (2.9%, n = 7); those coming from positions outside education (0.8%, n = 2); and others representing positions like librarian, assessment coordinators, and even a provost (3.4%, n = 8). Total missing entries was 7 or 2.9% of respondents.

The percentage of persons who typed in "chair" for the question, "What position/title did you hold prior to serving in your current position?" was 3.2% (n = 8). These same respondents qualified for the survey by denying in the first question they were ever chairs at their present institution. As such, they were included in the data because I assumed they were referring to being chairs at other institutions. The decision to include them is based upon the claim that chair roles differ widely from institution to institution due to varying departmental characteristics (e.g., hostile versus friendly political environment).

The minimum length of service in previous positions named in the proceeding question is three months. The maximum time represented in a previous position is 40 years. Individuals were grouped into six categories: 0-5 years experience, 6-10 years experience, 11-15 years experience, 16-20 years experience, 21-30 years experience, and 31-40 years experience (see Figure 4.2). The average length of time served in the previous position of new department chair's overall was 9.08 years.

Figure 4.2.
Length of Service in Previous Position (n = 232; Missing, n = 6)
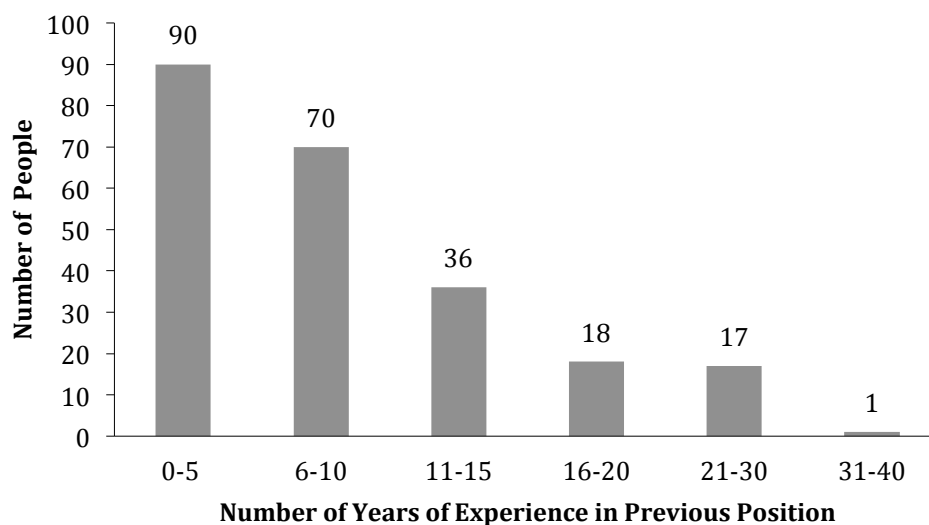
A majority of chairpersons were either appointed by the dean with the consultation and approval of the faculty (42.9%, n = 102) or were elected by the faculty to serve a definite term (42.0%, n = 100) (see Table 4.3). A small number of individuals were appointed by the dean without meaningful faculty consensus (12.6%, n = 30) and an even smaller number elected by the faculty to serve an indefinite term (2.5%, n = 6).

Table 4.3.
Mode of Entry into the Department Chair Role (n = 238)

Nature of Appointment as Chair	n	%
I was appointed by the dean with the consultation and approval of faculty	102	42.9
I was appointed by the dean without meaningful faculty consultation/approval	30	12.6
I was elected by the faculty to serve a definite term	100	42.0
I was elected by the faculty to serve an indefinite term	6	2.5

More than three in four chairs surveyed had a doctorate as the highest degree earned (90.8%, n = 216). Other degrees from the data representing the highest credential earned included master's (5.0%, n = 12), both doctorate and professional (2.5%, n = 6), and professional (1.7%, n = 4).

Respondents were asked to rate their agreement about the degree to which the following responsibilities were part of their role as department head: departmental representative, communication and staff development, organizer, and leadership. Definitions were provided for each of the responsibilities listed. Being an organizer (i.e., "Engage in planning, allocating faculty responsibilities, and delegating responsibilities equitably.") had the highest mean (M = 4.47, SD = .70) of a 5-point Likert-scale with the communication and staff development

responsibility following close behind (M = 4.38, SD = .75) (see Table 4.4). The leadership

category was agreed upon by respondents as comprising a good amount of their role as

department chair (M = 4.16, SD = .83), whereas, departmental representative carried less support

among individuals (M = 3.99, SD = 1.05) and included a greater variation in answers. Overall,

76.0% (n = 190) of individuals rated the suggested responsibilities either 4.0 or 5.0 on a Likert

scale of 1 = Hardly Any through 5 = A Good Amount. In short, there was agreement among

respondents the four categories presented was a fair representation of some of the responsibilities

shared by participating department chairs.

Table 4.4.
Means and Standard Deviations of Group Ratings for Select Responsibilities as Part of the Department Chair Role (n = 238)

Responsibility	M	SD
Departmental Representative	3.99	1.05
Communication and Staff Development	4.38	.75
Organizer	4.47	.70
Leadership	4.16	.83

Table 4.5 shows nearly all responding department chairs report to their Dean. Several (n

= 5) report directly to their Chief Academic Officer and only a few (n = 3) said they report to a

Director.

The length of time each of these supervisors has served in the position (rounded to the

nearest year) is displayed in Table 4.6. Two (n = 50, 21.0%), three (n = 39, 16.4%), and seven

plus years (n = 47, 19.7%) are the most frequently reported answers. Five years (n = 19, 8.0%)

and six years (n = 14, 5.9%) are the least frequently reported answers.

Table 4.5.
Reporting Relationship by Percent (n = 238)

Item	n	%
Chief Executive Officer (e.g., president, chancellor, equivalent)	0	0.0
Chief Academic Officer	5	2.1
Vice President/Vice Chancellor	0	0.0
Vice Provost	0	0.0
Dean	230	96.6
Director	3	1.3

Table 4.6.
Length of Time a Department Chair's Supervisor has Served in the Supervisory Position by Percent (n = 238)

Length of time (in years)	n	%
Less than 1 year	23	9.7
1 year	23	9.7
2 years	50	21.0
3 years	39	16.4
4 years	23	9.7
5 years	19	8.0
6 years	14	5.9
7+ years	47	19.7

Of the 236 who responded to the question, "How would you rate the overall performance of the <name of supervisor>?" 44.1% (n = 105) replied with a judgment of "Good." An additional 26.9% (n = 64) rated their immediate supervisor's performance as "Outstanding." The

bottom half of the ratings included 7.1% (n = 17) answering with "Poor" and 10.1% (n = 24) responding with "Only So-So." Eleven percent (n = 26) answered with "In Between." The average response leaned towards a positive outlook of supervisors' performance, i.e., M = 3.74, SD = 1.17. Those favoring their supervisor's performance totaled 71.6% (n = 169) as compared to 17.4% (n = 41) of persons rating their supervisor's performance as negative.

Frequencies from the open-ended question, "What are the three greatest challenges you have faced during your time as a department chair/head?" were not coded for general themes or broad categories because the answers were too short. Rather, the number of times a specific word showed up is reported. Specifically, the word "Faculty" showed up the most with a total of 209 times. Negative or positive context of the use of the word "Faculty" is also not clarified because the brevity of responses did not provide enough detail to warrant categorization. No specific word appeared as much as "Faculty," but "Budget" surfaced next with 71 appearances. "Students" were mentioned a total of 38 times. All other words had minimal redundancies and are not reported.

The data showed 40.3% (n = 96) of responding chairs desire to return to full-time faculty work once their time is up as department chair (see Table 4.7). Not as many wished to pursue another term as department chair (31.1%, n = 74). Only a relative few decided to apply for a dean position at the conclusion of their time as chair (12.6%, n = 30). A smaller group favored applying for another administrative position (8.8%, n = 21) instead. Lastly, 6.7% of respondents (n = 16) stated they wished to leave higher education altogether.

Table 4.7.
Career Aspirations of Department Chairs (n = 237; Missing, n = 1)

Career Aspiration	n	%
Pursue another term as department char	74	30.0
Return to full-time faculty work	96	38.9
Apply for a dean position	30	12.7
Apply for another administrative position	21	8.5
Leave higher education altogether	16	6.5

Inferential Statistics

Research question: How well do a new department chair's role confidence, personality needs,

and role support predict role certainty among new department chairs?

Of primary interest in conducting this research is to understand the factors that most

influence the role certainty new department chairs have of their job. That is, how much of the

variation in new department chairs' certainty of their role can be explained by a combination of

the role, themselves, and the support while in the role? In order to determine the relative

importance of each of these predictors I regressed role certainty on the nine scales derived from

principal components analysis in combination with two structural variables (i.e., career

aspirations and mode of entry) using multiple linear regression. Though an argument can be

made that one is a person first and in a role second, suggesting that personality needs ought to be

entered into the model as a block initially and then aspects of the role (i.e., role confidence and

role support), I maintain there cannot be a true separation of the self from the role (Ashforth &

Saks, 1995). The self and the role are so intertwined that understanding where one ends and the

other begins is difficult. Thus, this research is about studying persons who are already in a role (i.e., new department chairs) and necessitates the predictor variables be considered simultaneously. The analysis showed how well the scales of role confidence (i.e., discretion, novelty), personality needs (i.e., intolerance for ambiguity, need for control over department performance, and need for control over own tasks), and role support (i.e., department climate, leader feedback, opportunity for feedback, indirect feedback) are able to predict role certainty. Moreover, the analysis also indicated how much unique variance each of the scales is able to describe of the dependent variable. The statistics selected to run with the regression analysis included: estimates, confidence intervals, model fit, descriptive statistics, and collinearity diagnostics. A normal probability plot was requested for reasons of inspecting the assumption of normality of errors. Finally, SPSS was instructed to exclude cases pairwise.

The present study was framed under the larger concepts of role confidence, personality needs, and role support. However, the analysis focuses on the nine scales – and additional two structural variables – making up these larger concepts. The nine scales were developed through principal components analysis as detailed earlier.

The relationship between perceived role certainty (i.e., the dependent variable) and each of the nine scales (department climate, intolerance for ambiguity, discretion, novelty, need for control over department performance, need for control over own tasks, leader feedback, indirect feedback, opportunity for feedback), as well as two structural variables (career aspirations, mode of entry) was first investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. All of the scales and structural variables, except for novelty, indirect feedback, and mode of entry show at least some relationship with the dependent variable, role certainty. And, though there exist some correlations between scales (cf., Discretion and Intolerance for ambiguity, $r = .23$) indicating

they share something the correlation is never above .3 except between "Need for control over

department performance" and "Need for control over own tasks" ($r = .48$) (see Table 4.8).

Table 4.8
Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations (n = 238)

Factor	M	SD	(DV)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)
(DV) Role certainty	3.48	.60	__											
(1) Department climate	3.70	.91	.28**	__										
(2) Intolerance for ambiguity	3.21	.79	.21**	-.05	__									
(3) Discretion	3.86	.78	.34**	.10	.23**	__								
(4) Novelty	2.52	.98	.08	-.02	.13	.23**	__							
(5) Need for control over department performance	3.60	.95	.23**	.01	.12	.08	.08	__						
(6) Need for control over own tasks	3.86	.88	.22**	.11	.17**	.20**	.15*	.48**	__					
(7) Leader feedback	3.24	1.07	.25**	-.05	.05	.13*	.02	.01	.03	__				
(8) Indirect feedback	2.75	1.02	.02	-.06	-.21**	.04	-.02	.07	-.01	.09	__			
(9) Opportunity for feedback	2.02	1.65	.17**	.14*	.02	.06	.01	.10	.03	.12	.10	__		
(10) Career aspirations	2.19	1.17	.30**	.15*	.17**	.20**	-.03	.11	.15*	.07	.10	.07	__	
(11) Mode of entry	2.04	.98	-.11	.15*	-.14*	-.11	-.16*	.05	-.05	-.14*	-.14*	.00	-.12	__

* Correlation is significant, p < .05 (2-tailed).
 ** Correlation

Multiple Regression Model

Both variables "Career aspirations" (i.e., pursue further administration/not pursue further administration) and "Mode of entry" (i.e., appointed by administration/elected by faculty) were added to the model during the exploratory phase of analysis. Including them was based upon the thinking they may have something to do with how new chairs view themselves in the role and thereby might contribute to the model. In particular, career aspirations were identified as important because of the various motivations that exist for faculty to take on the department chair role. One such motivation is to pursue further administration, such as, a future deanship. Another motivation may be to "take one for the team" with the intention to return to faculty life after their tenure is up. The risk of "taking one for the team" is that faculty may never completely make the mental shift over to job of the chair (Seedorf, 1990). Consequently, trying to figure out what the job is about may never take root for someone who has little interest in understanding middle administration and policy-directed tasks. The scale career aspiration was grouped into those who have a desire to pursue further administration and those who wish to return to faculty work. A medium strong positive correlation of .30 (p < .05) exists between role certainty and career aspirations suggesting there is some relationship worth exploring.

Mode of entry was the other variable added to the model and includes persons who were either appointed by senior leadership or those elected by faculty. The nature of how a chair is appointed becomes important to consider when thinking about how a department may respond to their leadership. If faculty peers elect the new chair, for instance, the faculty may have a representative voice within administrative discussions. On the other hand, if senior leadership appoints the chair there may well be accusations from faculty of administrative "creep" (Fitzgerald, 2011), which could affect any future performance of the new chair. A small negative

correlation of .11 exists between role certainty and mode of entry proposing its inclusion in the model may be questionable.

Multiple linear regression was used to evaluate the ability of eleven measures (i.e., (department climate, intolerance for ambiguity, discretion, novelty, need for control over department performance, need for control over own tasks, leader feedback, indirect feedback, and opportunity for feedback, career aspirations, and mode of entry) to predict the role certainty of new department chairs.

Figure 4.3 shows the data points are randomly and evenly scattered with a majority of them within the range of ± 2 standard deviations of the mean (Pedhazur & Schmelkin, 1991) ensuring no violation of the assumptions of linearity and homoscedasticity occurred. Moreover, the normality of residuals in the histogram (see Figure 4.4) displays a normal distribution. Figure 4.5 also shows a normal distribution of the data set because all the points lie on or close to the line. Moreover, the model proposed poses no cause for concern given tolerance for each of the variables is neither below 0.1 nor 0.2 supporting the conclusion there is no multicollinearity within this study's data.

Figure 4.3.
Scatterplot of Residuals Against Predicted Scores
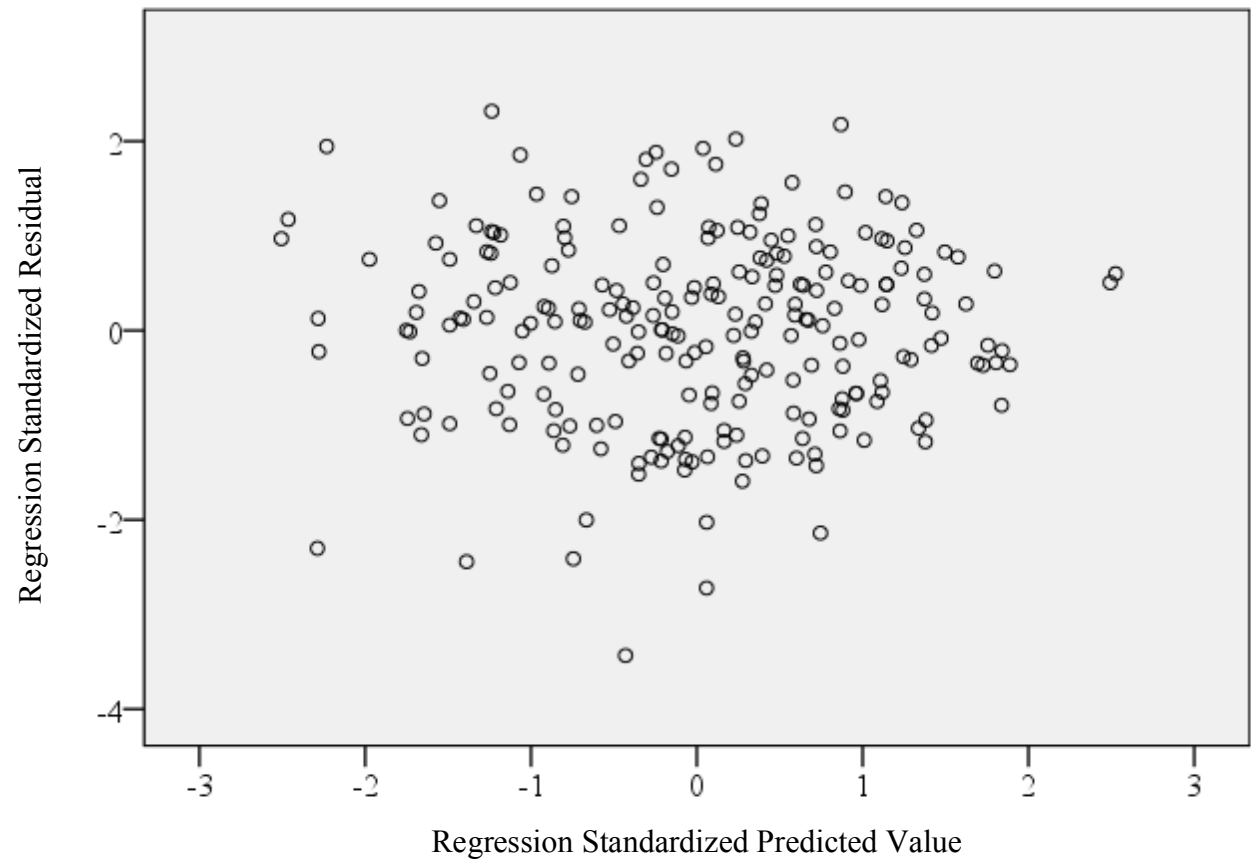
Figure 4.4.
Histogram of the Dependent Variable, Role Certainty
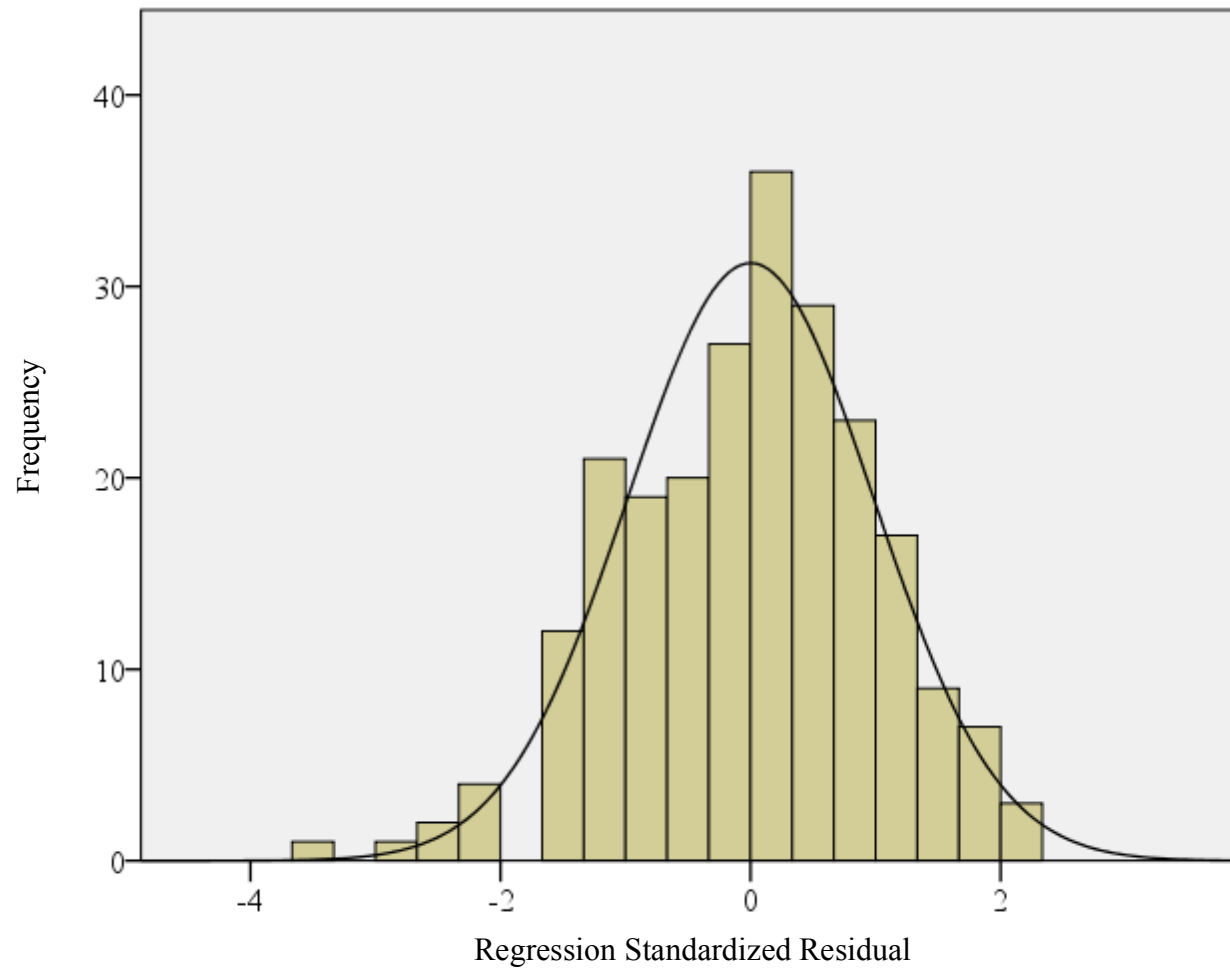
Figure 4.5.
Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual
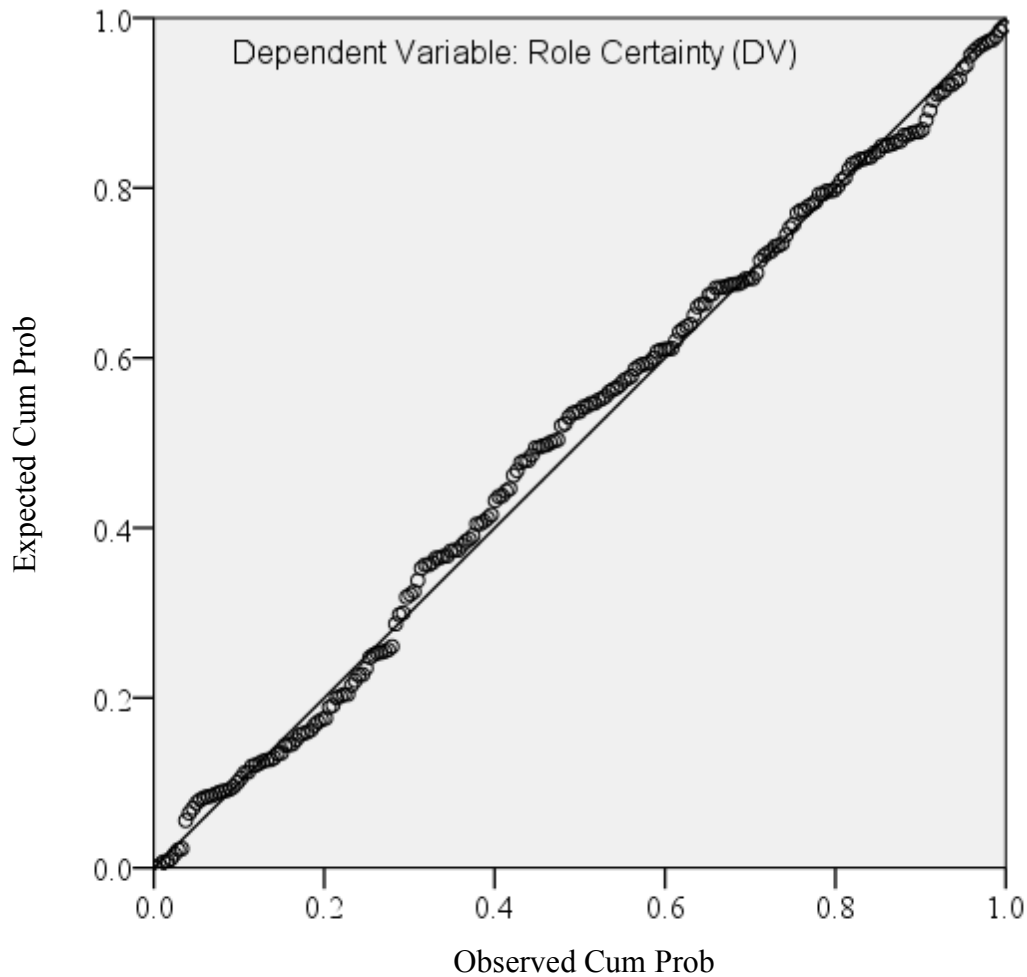
The total variance explained by the model as a whole was 32.1%, $F(11, 222) = 9.519$, p

< .001 suggesting the model is a better fit of the data and is also better at predicting role certainty

than using the mean leading to an answer of "moderately well" for the research question, "How

well do a new department chair's role confidence, personality needs, and role support predict

role certainty among new department chairs?" The difference between R^2 and the adjusted R^2 is

.321 - .288 = .033, signifying that if the study's model began with the population instead of the

sample it would account for 3.3% less variance in the outcome.

What is the relative contribution of each scale to the role certainty of new chairs?

The following predictors were significantly related to the outcome, role certainty:

discretion, need for control over department performance, department climate, leader feedback,

and career aspirations. The following predictors were not significantly related to the outcome,

role certainty: novelty, intolerance for ambiguity, need for control over own tasks, opportunity

for feedback, indirect feedback, and mode of entry (see Table 4.9). The standard coefficients for

predictors significantly related to the outcome are: discretion (β = .210), need for control over

department performance (β = .172), department climate (β = .244), leader feedback (β = .201),

and career aspirations (β = .164).

Table 4.9.
Coefficients Summary for Independent Variables Predicting Role Certainty of New Department Chairs

Variable	β	t	p
Role Confidence			
Discretion	.210	3.48	.001*
Novelty	.001	.02	.981
Personality needs			
Intolerance for ambiguity	.091	1.50	.134
Need for control over department performance	.172	2.67	.008*
Need for control over own tasks	.013	.21	.837
Role support			
Department climate	.244	4.16	.000*
Leader feedback	.201	3.52	.001*
Opportunity for feedback	.069	1.22	.225
Indirect feedback	-.019	-.32	.747
Structural variables			
Career aspirations	.164	2.78	.006*
Mode of entry	-.075	-1.27	.205

Note. R^2 = .321 (N = 238, p < .05)
* Correlation is significant, p < .05 (2-tailed).

Career aspirations

The career aspirations scale was meant to discover who among respondents had a desire to pursue further administration versus those who wished to return to faculty work. A medium strong positive correlation of .30 (p < .01) existed between role certainty and career aspirations suggesting there was some relationship worth exploring. The data support this premise and show that career aspirations matter at a level of significance (p < .05) in explaining role certainty and uniquely contribute (β = .164) to its description. Results indicate that 47.1% (n = 112) of current chairs were planning to pursue further administration, as compared to 52.5% (n = 125) who would return to faculty work. Carroll (1991) reported that of his sample nearly 64.7% of the chairs went back to faculty work right after holding the chair post compared to 18.7% who pursued further administration (3.4% left academe, 7.8% retired). What is interesting is that new chairs intending to return to faculty work were more certain about their role as chair than those pursuing administrative careers (cf., *M* = 3.65, *SD* = .50; *M* = 3.28, *SD* = 3.28; p < .05; Cohen's *d,* .09). The findings of the present study are the first in the department chair literature to include career aspirations as a factor in explaining the role certainty of new chairs. However, the findings are consistent with other studies that found significant relationships between career transitions and self-awareness in job tasks (Chao, O'Leary-Kelly, Wolf, Klein, & Gardner, 1994; Louis, 1980; Nicholson, 1984; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979).

Department climate

The department climate scale proved to contribute the most in explaining the variance of role certainty (β = .244) at a level of significance (p < .05) – a finding that was unexpected. The scale was initially meant to establish a contextual basis for the model, however, the scale ended up being more important in explaining how people were making sense (Gioia & Thomas, 1996)

of their environment. The findings should not come as a total surprise though as numerous

psychological climate studies have shown its influence on cognition, individual work outcomes,

job satisfaction and organizational commitment (cf., Carr et al., (2003) meta analysis of 51

relevant studies; Parker et al., (2003) meta analysis of 94 studies). Additionally, Brown and

Leigh (1996) found that an environment thought by employees to be psychologically "safe" was

positively related to an understanding of what the position required. On average most individuals

from the present study viewed their department with optimism (M = 3.70, SD = .91) agreeing

that their work environment displayed cooperation among individuals, as well as produced work

of higher quality and quantity than others on campus. The squared part correlation value for the

department climate scale is 5.6%, which represents only the unique contribution of this variable

with all shared variance removed.

Discretion

The scale was intended to capture the latitude individuals have to accomplish the

demands of the job as chair. High scores on the discretion scale mean that participants were

afforded the leeway to do the job of department chair. Responses on average were moderately

high (cf., M = 3.86, SD = .78). West, Nicholson, and Rees (1987) argue there exist *a priori*

reasons that job discretion will be higher among those entering into newly created positions than

for those entering well-understood ones. The results from the present study support their

argument if one accepts the chair's role as inherently vague (Boyko, 2009; Bennet & Figuli,

1990; Werkema, 2009). The data indicate that discretion was the second largest contributor to

role certainty (β = .210) explaining 3.2% of the total variance of R^2 at a positive level of

significance (p < .05).

Need for control over department performance

The need for control over department performance measure was meant to capture whether new chairs had high needs for control. On average participants desired control over department performance ($M = 3.60$, $SD = .95$) having a desire to develop the role where the outcomes of their behaviors can be predicted, i.e., job change (Black & Ashford, 1995). Black and Ashford (1995) found that need for control was not significantly associated with job change – an aspect not dissimilar to role certainty. What I found was the scale positively contributed at a level of significance in describing the role certainty ($\beta = .172$, $p < .05$). Moreover, the scale explained 2.3% (i.e., squared part correlation value) of role certainty among new chairs showing more explanatory power than originally thought. This finding becomes important particularly as one considers that a desire for control over department performance may actually fuel role development (Nicholson, 1984; West, Nicholson, & Rees, 1987) amidst circumstances of the reported high discretion felt by participants (cf., $M = 3.86$, $SD = .78$).

Leader feedback

The data from this study indicate that leader feedback is the third largest contributor of role certainty ($\beta = .201$, $p < .05$) explaining 3.1% of the total variance in R^2 (i.e., squared part correlation value). The finding that leader feedback is positively associated with an increase in role certainty is consistent with previous research. Notably, Hancock and Hellawell (2003) found that the middle managers they interviewed agreed performing effectively demanded an awareness of the thinking by the administrative level above them. When this knowledge was missing, middle managers believed their performance was handicapped. Others too have found that new hires require information from supervisors in an attempt to figure out their organizations and themselves (cf., Louis, 1980; Ostroff & Kozslowski, 1992). Also supporting

this finding is the expanding literature on career transitions, which highlights the importance of relational support in reducing ambiguity and "generally making things easier" for newcomers (Pinder & Schroeder, 1987, p. 340). Finally, in their meta-analysis of 94 studies with a total sample size of 65,830, Parker et al. (2003) found elements relating to job tasks and leadership had the strongest association with psychological well-being of employees. And, when upper administration was thought to be supportive employees were more likely to be engaged in their job and maintained greater determination (Brown & Leigh, 1996).

Conclusion

To summarize, of the initial eleven scales and structural variables thought to explain the variance in role certainty scores, only five reached a level of significance and uniquely contributed in describing the outcome, role certainty (i.e., department climate, career aspirations, discretion, need for control over department performance, and leader feedback). The contributions of department climate, discretion, and leader feedback, however, are relatively more important in explaining the variation in scores of new department chairs than any of the other factors posited. The regression model seems to be error-free for the sample and generalizable to the population. Because the assumptions have been met we can safely suggest that this model would generalize to the role certainty of any new department chair.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an interpretation of the research findings as related to the original research question, "How well do a new department chair's role confidence, personality needs, and role support predict role certainty among new department chairs?" A summary of the research problem and purpose are offered followed by comparisons of the study's findings to the larger body of higher education and organizational literatures. I discuss implications of the research findings making a connection to the broader professional practice of the new department chair. Additionally, recommendations will be offered before concluding with how the findings contribute to the overall understanding of the role certainty of the new department chairperson.

The purpose of this research was to discover if the variables role confidence, personality needs, and role support were predictive in explaining the role certainty of new department chairs. More particularly, the research was intended to discover the relative contribution of each of the scales making up the predictor variables. What I expected to find was a model that explained a sizeable portion of the variances among and between new department chairs' sense of role certainty. Based upon theory and research I envisioned each of the three-predictor variables having a similar amount of influence, making each of them important in their own right.

Guiding my inquiry were various points of view from the higher education literature about the role of the department chair, as well as select studies on the middle manager from the organizational literature. In particular, Nicholson's (1984) work role transition theory from the organizational literature was used as a means of framing how role confidence, personality needs, and role support predict the role certainty of new department chairs. Research has not been done

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in higher education looking at the relative contribution of these specific variables to the role certainty of new department chairs. What is missing from the higher education literature is a discussion about those factors that influence the role certainty of new chairs specifically in response to daily operations. Instead, the extant literature provides descriptions about the role's apparent vagueness, as well as the difficulty in categorizing it as faculty or administrator (Bennett & Figuli, 1990; Boyko, 2009; Seagren, 1993; Westcott, 2000). Adding to the uncertainty of the position is the steep learning curve associated with the job. The curve is a result of the changes that accompany the individual moving from faculty work where in most cases very little administrative experience has been attained to department chair work where as much as 80% of all institutional administrative decisions occurs (Carroll & Wolverton, 2004; McLaughlin, Montgomery & Sullins, 1977; Roach, 1976).

As a result, discovering what affects such vagueness becomes important if new chairs are to make contributions (Pinder & Schroeder, 1987) both to the department and the institution. The frequently short tenures of department chairs combined with a definite period of "discontinuity and flux" (Ashforth & Saks, 1995, p. 157), as well as issues of middleness for the department chair within the university (Clegg & McAuley, 2005; Dill, 1982; 1984) presented an opportunity to investigate how the time can be shortened for new chairs to make contributions.

Model explained

The results clearly show that a department chair position perceived by newcomers as supported by the dean is positively related to role certainty through the mediation of discretion and department climate. New chairs are confident in their role when the dean nurtures the freedom to adjust the goals and relationships of a new chair's department. The following is an

account of each of the predictor variables found to uniquely contribute to the role certainty of new department chairs at a level of statistical significance.

Department climate

The relative contribution of department climate was greatest in uniquely explaining the role certainty among and between new chairs. This finding shows that how chairs perceive the workplace carries slightly more influence over their confidence about the role than does receiving feedback from peers or the dean. Based on the data this means the degree to which new chairs can make contributions to and on behalf of the department is first dependent upon the perceived level of cooperation among faculty, faculty productivity, open communication, and an environment conducive to the expression of opinions, ideas, and suggestions (Jones & James, 1979). The good news among this sample is that most people viewed their present departmental climate as positive. On the one hand this perspective is coming from persons who may still be in a transitory state (Nicholson, 1984) and enjoying the challenge of new leadership for the benefit of their colleagues. On the other hand, the response may be entirely reflective of Hargreaves' (1995) assertion that managers often miscalculate the ability of personnel to hide things from them. As a result, they may perceive everything to be fine because there is no one around to tell them the department is in disarray. The status of the climate by the observing new hire has a direct bearing on their certainty of what the job is about. This is not to say the outlook of the department must be a positive one, but rather that making quick sense of what is happening around them is critical. However, there is an argument to be made that congenial departments may contribute to a fast orientation for the new chair since at employees make contributions to the organization when they sense the environment is secure thereby allowing them to work without fear of destruction to their awareness, influence, or position (Brown & Leigh, 1996;

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Kahn, 1990). The fact that department climate best explains role certainty for this model means that new chairs ought to hone skills for assessing the departmental environment if they are to move quickly towards figuring what to do about it, if anything.

Discretion

The present research shows discretion is the second largest contributor of role certainty among and between new chairs. This means that the degree to which new chairs are afforded the latitude to modify the structures of relationships and goals within their department affects what they think the chair job is about (Fenner & Selmer, 2008; Nicholson, 1984). Increased freedom precedes psychological adjustment and becomes important when it predicts the capacity for making contributions to the department. In particular, the data say that when freedom is provided for chairs to act independently of their dean, set their own work objectives/targets, prioritize when different parts of the role are done, and choose whom to deal with in order to carry out departmental work, chairs fare better psychologically than those who have limited or no freedom. Admittedly, the idea of giving new chairs lots of freedom to do a job they have never done before where little institutional and professional help is available is somewhat counter-intuitive. The notion is made worse, when one considers the generally accepted difficulty of the job (Bennett & Figuli, 1990; Boyko, 2009; Seagren, 1993; Westcott, 2000). This study originally proposed the position of department chair is one of high discretion because of the ambiguity of the role's chief objectives, which while sometimes explicitly laid out in formal job descriptions, are never fully realized by newcomers until the individual begins the actual work of the position. Based upon the data, discretion is an essential element for sorting out role certainty among new department chairs. Where there is high discretion the capacity for contributions increases because the core questions of "What can I do about it?" and "Do I have the latitude to do

anything about it?" have been answered even if other peripheral ones have not. The most common form for adjustments to discretion levels is through the dean-chair relationship (1984) a feature of this research discussed next.

Leader feedback

Pinder and Schroeder (1987) found that in addition to the levels of difference between new and previous roles being indicative of time to proficiency, the degree of seeming support for newcomers was the most important factor predicting role certainty. One implication of considering leader feedback alongside discretion is that the dean is a potential source for giving new chairs the freedom to act independently, set objectives, establish priorities, and choose with whom to carry out departmental work. As such, an assumption made going into the study was that the dean is more or less a gatekeeper for the chair getting up to speed (Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992). Perhaps this is why the relative contribution of leader feedback was the third largest contributor in explaining role certainty among new department chairs. The finding that leader feedback is important supports the work of Klein, Fan, and Preacher (2006) who found that agent helpfulness – a term similar to leader feedback – is related with role clarity, or in this case, role certainty. Offering regular opportunities for new department chairs to find out how well they are doing in their job also supports Katz's (1980) perspective that newcomers require ongoing information to construct a view of their new employment situation and how they are to operate within it. Additionally, according to Louis (1980) as well as McCall and Simmons (1978), key people within organizations hold vast influence on how newcomers come to figure out their role, making the dean a major player in how new chairs will respond to their new post. Thus, increasing opportunities for feedback may be a start for addressing ambiguity among new department chairs so long as the increased feedback is purposeful and useful (Lurie &

Swaminathan, 2009), which raises new questions on what exactly is helpful to new department chairs. This too, however, is interesting as too much information may actually get in the way (Ilgen, Fisher, & Taylor, 1979) of sorting out what is going on and fail to encourage contributions. My point is that each new chair requires different levels of support based upon their desire for control, which places the skill of discernment at the top of a dean's set of leader support skills.

The fact that at least a portion of role certainty is dependent upon the thinking by those administrators above department chairs is consistent with Hancock and Hellawell's (2003) study that discovered middle managers believed their own performance was handicapped when knowledge of what supervisors were thinking was missing. The parallels between my study's findings and those of Hancock and Hellawell (2003) raises concerns as to how much cognitive space new chairs take up managing the perception of their own image (Gioia & Thomas, 1996) to cope with the deficit of what their deans are thinking. When deans are not forthcoming with information role certainty is unlikely to take root among new chairs. Translating these observations for the new department chair may mean newcomers need to develop strategies for building trust with the dean to shore up a lack of supervisor discernment and feedback. Some strategies for building trust may include initiating communication, making frequent contact, and offering complete candor (Campbell, 2009; Hancock & Hellawell, 2003).

Need for control over department performance

The data show that need for control over department performance affected the role certainty of new chairs at a level of significance. The results indicate that new hires are more acquainted with the aspects of their job when they desire control over performance standards in the department and the quality of the faculty's work. This conclusion makes sense when three

assumptions coexist. One, that employees react poorly to stress when control over one's tasks is lessened (Greenberger, 1989). Two, the chair role is filled with stress (Boyko, 2009; Gmelch, 1991; Williams, 2007; Smith & Wolverton, 2010). And three, the department chair is responsible to the institution for his or her faculty's increased research activity, exemplary teaching, and commitment to student and university service (Altbach, 2005; Clegg & McAuley, 2005; Duderstadt, 2000). A call for public colleges and universities to find more prudent ways of management (Adams, Robichaux, & Guarino, 2010; Shulman, 2007) creates an opportunity for the higher education community to rediscover the types of chairs required in today's highly accountable environment. New chairs who know they require high levels of control may strategize on ways to achieve more control and gain higher status for their departments as a result. This thinking has significant applications for practice because the data imply that search committees may wish to find new chairs who are resolute towards their department's performance. However interesting, finding a chair determined towards department performance raises a question about the degree to which they are able to move forward on a performance agenda once appointed. On a larger scale the contribution of need for control over department performance in explaining role certainty offers a reason to consider how new chairpersons draw upon other personal attributes for sorting out what is going on around them in their new post – attributes that were not measured in the present study.

Career aspirations

Department chairs intending to return to faculty work were more certain about their role as a new chair than those pursuing administrative careers. This finding is counter to Pinder and Schroeder (1987) who found that new hires doing jobs that were more different than their previous role (e.g., faculty in new chair roles) had the longest times to proficiency – an aspect

similar to role certainty. What is interesting is that we do not know if the faculty from the sample look longingly to their former life and never make the mental leap over to the chair role (Seedorf, 1990), or live fully in the present. If looking longingly back to faculty life, new chairs may exert little effort to understand what the role should entail resulting in little interest towards working as middle administration let alone implementing policies they did not decide (Couch, 1979; Clegg & McAuley, 2005; Ghoshal & Bartlett, 1998; Kanter, 1986). With a focus on the present, however, chairs may perform more reactively and avoid accruing the skills necessary for making contributions to his or her department. On the one hand chairs not intending to pursue further administration may be good for the institution because they are not distracted by career planning and unrelated initiatives to the post. On the other hand, new chairs intending to pursue further administration are more likely to create long-term goals (Ashforth, Sluss, & Harrison, 2007). Electing ambitious new chairs with long-range goals for further administration may pay dividends for the department as these persons seek skills required for upward movement and may subsequently draw on them to aid the department.

<div align="center">Implications for Theory & Research</div>

Because this study is not about the effectiveness of new department chairs in the role (see Caroll & Gmelch, 1992; Hoyt and Spangler, 1978; Knight & Holen, 1985; McDaniel, 2002; Middendorf, 2009; Smith & Wolverton, 2010; Spendlove, 2007; Williams, 2007), other possible factors, or triggers, may influence the outcome of role certainty. Such triggers may include things like the hiring of a new dean, substantive changes in institutional policy, coworker scandals and/or major accomplishments requiring new sensemaking (Gioia & Thomas, 1996). Other triggers may relate to heightened and time-consuming external reporting, new curricular standards, and even departmental infighting. How personal stress outside the workplace affects

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newcomer learning (Jones, 1986; Louis, 1980) is also an important area to be explored going forward.

Future research may include digging deeper into specific aspects of role confidence. One such area for further research is how the academic experience of faculty members can be applied to the scholar-advocacy metaphor of the department chair position (Williams, 2007). What would be valuable is if new studies investigated how particular disciplines allow new chairs to draw more from their experience as a faculty member than do others. Additional research is also needed that looks at how the maturity of an individual – presumably resulting from more work experience – affects the shock of entering the new chair role with its lack of support (Werkema, 2009) and "surprises and unexpected sacrifices" (Gmelch, 1991, abstract).

Whereas, the present study looked at how the personal attributes of individuals interacted (Nicholson, 1984) with one aspect of an institution's social system (i.e., leader support), further study is needed on the effects of other types of institutional support offered for faculty members transitioning into a new chair role, e.g., human resources, faculty and organizational development offices. Doing so would aid in a greater understanding of how individuals and their personal attributes interact with established services meant to quell much of the ambiguity inherent in a new role. After discovering the degree to which institutions may or may not provide help, scholarship on department chairs would benefit from research on best models of practice. What would be equally useful is a discovery of the value added to new chairs who attended such socialization programs versus those who did not.

Chao et al. (1994) propose that content learning and subsequent learning of one's role extends well beyond the newcomer stage, continuing the longer a person is in the role. As such, a limitation of the present work is the concentration on the newcomer chair. While this single-

mindedness is the crux of my argument – that is, making contributions is determined by shortening the learning curve of newcomers – this effort places undue strain on learning the role at the front end of one's career as a chair. As a result, department chair research would profit from assessing the utility of different socialization models within higher education and in particular how the continuous socialization model (Taormina, 1997) explains ongoing role certainty among department chairs overall. Such studies may consider how learning occurs over the career of a department chair and whether or not there exist various learning periods of intensity and drought (Hellawell & Hancock, 2003).

Other inquiry will need to focus on what types of metrics appropriately portray role certainty's economic impact on institutions. For example, this study claimed that making contributions to the institution is first indicative of having certainty about the role from which such contributions are made (Pinder & Schroeder, 1987). However, what is needed is empirical work tracing role certainty's relative contribution on the economic language associated with academic middle management. This language might consist not of dollars and cents on the front end, but policies and tasks that necessarily translate into dollars at the back end. These things would include the hiring and firing of faculty, budget and planning, as well as far more policy implementation and reporting than faculty are used to dealing with.

Understanding how select factors predict the role certainty for new department chairs applies to the broader research community interested in change and development of institutions. In particular, the present research provides a glimpse into how the interaction between new department chairs and institutional systems may affect each other (Nicholson, 1984). Groups such as faculty and organizational development units within universities would be interested to know how findings from this study apply to their individual institution. More specifically, the

findings from this study may be applicable in the development of particular seminars or leadership retreats, and possibly for thinking and talking about the relevance of current institutional socialization efforts for new chairs. Other experts in the field like the American Council on Education (ACE) and their "Chairing the Academic Department" workshop series may benefit from the present study's emphasis on leader support given ACE's own focus on teamwork and leadership. And, while there appears to be no leadership initiative strictly focused on department chairs within the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), the association may be interested in this study because of the match between their membership and my targeted sample population. Others who may benefit from this project may include new department chairs who do not know where to start on day one of their post, deans who are concerned with the improvement of their college and recognize the prominence of the department chair in accomplishing such a feat, and finally provosts or vice presidents of academic affairs who understand the intensity of institutional policy implementation at the chair level.

Finally, more research is needed on a model for predicting the role certainty of new chairs. Faculty members are socialized to be experts, especially in research (Dill, 1982), but this same faculty sometimes ends up in chairperson positions and must deal with the fact the two positions demand different things. By discovering the significance of department climate, discretion, leader feedback, need for control over department performance, and career aspirations for the role certainty of new chairs we have a different way of thinking about the current scholarship on department chairs. Research on how people do the job of department chair (cf. Bone 2002; Carroll 1991; Hecht 1999; Peters 1994), who is in the role (Boyko 2009; Carroll 2004; Moses & Roe, 1985), and how people prepare for it (Bone, 2002; Hecht, 2006; Peters,

1994; Staton-Spicer & Spicer, 1987; Wolverton, Ackerman, & Holt, 2005) may be first more dependent upon one's desire for control, departmental context, dean support, and career intentions than previously thought. Continuing to assess what the role of department chair is about from a task-list perspective is not helpful in discovering how the chair is involved in larger issues of "educational strategy and direction" (Amey, 1989, p. 12). As such, more department chair research based upon theory is needed for refining a model that is better at explaining how chairs see themselves in the role (Gmelch, 1991).

<center>Implications for Practice</center>

Dill's (1982) sober analysis reveals that institutions can no longer rest entirely on historical reputation in the face of increasing competition for funding from a wide class of donors, top-notch students and faculty, as well as a spot in the top rankings of the day (Boyko, 2009; Smerek, 2010; Wolverton, 2005). Dill posits the institution that invests in the development of its workforce will gain "uncommon loyalty and commitment" from workers resulting in a university where contributions (Pinder & Schroeder, 1987) are made out of a surplus of goodwill and not in reaction to pressing mandates (Cullen, Joyce, Hassall, & Broadbent, 2003). Dill's questions force the reader to at least consider how the professional development of new department chairs may have something to say about the operations found in the administration of higher education.

Other recommendations for practice include looking for faculty who can sum up a situation accurately and quickly and present several perspectives simultaneously. By quickly realizing the composite picture of the department climate new chairs will be able to get beyond the question, what's going on here, and work on answering, what can I do about it thereby making contributions in much less time.

Search committees might also look for faculty based upon current levels of discretion offered by the dean to other existing chairs. If there exists no practice of discretion, then a stronger desire for control may be required in the candidate, as those persons are more resolute in seeking information helping them clarify their role.

Based upon the findings of the present study we know there is need for deans to be involved in the development of newcomer department chairs. This result should be evidence that new conversations need to take place institutionally about the responsibility of the dean in the future development of their middle managers, the department chair. Such efforts may translate into less time spent by new chairs figuring out their role and more time spent in overcoming the hurdles inherent in meeting the demands of internal and external decision-makers. By extension, the social significance of organized and purposeful feedback by the dean to new department chairs may mean everyday tasks (e.g., budgeting) become easier to accomplish sooner. As a result, cognitive space would be freed up for chairs to ponder the bigger questions of teaching and learning, as well as questions posed by today's public and government officials like access, accountability, and affordability of higher education (Altbach, 2005; Duderstadt, 2000; Gayle, Tewarie, & White, 2003).

Finally, when looking to hire department chairs institutions ought to consider faculty who have a desire to advance the institution and are not necessarily bent towards refining their own national reputation. This may be a contrary position to some who feel that to qualify as an academic manager one must have first won large grants, published more than anyone in the department, and be well versed in matters of technology, governance, diversity, government affairs, and fundraising. Institutions should not want faculty to become chairs simply because they have checked off the right boxes, or because they can get along with faculty (Chao et al.,

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1994). If the goal of the department is to provide for the advancement, maintenance, and communication of knowledge (Coats, 2000), then a chair should have a proven record of being engaged at all levels of the university. By engaging at various levels with a variety of people would-be new chairs will have constructed systems of relationships, understand where to go for information, and how to navigate the various complexities of the university (Rhoads & Tierney, 1990; Tierney, 1988; 1990).

Conclusion

My results support previous findings by Pinder and Schroeder (1987) who stated that inhibitors of time to proficiency are more a result of situational concerns particular to the movement between jobs. The data from this research show that making contributions as a chair is bound up in finding (Ashford & Cummings, 1983, 1985; Miller & Jablin, 1991) and making sense (Gioia & Thomas, 1996) of the contextual knowledge (Dutton, Ashford, O'Neill, & Lawrence, 2001) surrounding the role of department chair. New chairs who fail to realize the knowledge that one "lives" as a subordinate, an equal, and as a superior (Clegg & McAuley, 2005; Uyterhoeven, 1972) will miss leveraging change for the department (Huy, 2001) resulting in a lack of upward influence for the benefits of the colleagues they represent (Falbe & Yukl, 1992). The interaction between new department chairs and the social system they enter offers opportunities for new discussions about changing from faculty member to department chair (Ashforth & Saks, 1995; Nicholson, 1984; Pinder & Schroeder, 1987) and supplies the higher education literature with empirical data on the role certainty of new department chairs. Furthermore, in an age of state appropriation reductions (Adams, Robichaux, & Guarino, 2010), and increasing competition between and among for-profit and non-profit higher education organizations, post-secondary institutions cannot afford to ignore getting new department chairs

up to speed for making contributions while in the role. Based upon the findings of this study institutions ought to look seriously at the role of the dean, the personal attributes and career aspirations of chair candidates, and current organizational development offices and programs in providing support to newcomer department chairs. More measures of accountability will invariably trickle down from state and federal policy makers (Boyko, 2009) in an effort to judge the performance effectiveness of state employees (e.g., university). Therefore, what is needed right now and is ultimately more helpful is to look not at endless lists of department chair responsibilities, nor how those are being carried out (Seagren, 1993), but at factors that influence the quality in completing those tasks. If the deficit of new department chair preparation is left ignored, institutional knowledge gaps will continue and perhaps even grow. However, as many universities transform from exclusive classrooms to public organizations, higher education must recognize that department chairs can be the catalysts for change in critical areas such as teaching and learning and in the implementation of pedagogical missions at the local level (Clegg & McAuley, 2005). The institution that pays attention to the role of newcomer chairpersons has the capacity to build superior loyalty and commitment in people living in the middle of organizational decision-making (Tierney, 2008).

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

SURVEY

Role Perceptions of Department Chairs

I am conducting research on department chairs/heads about their perception of their role. The purpose of this research is to understand the factors that most influence the perception a department chair/head has of their job. I invite you to share your experiences by taking this online survey. The survey should take no longer than 20 minutes.

Your help with this study will be immensely important to my research and I value your contribution. If you have any questions about the study, please contact me:

You indicate your voluntary agreement to participate by submitting this survey.

Timothy G. Campbell
Doctoral Candidate
Michigan State University
(989) 546-7457
chairfocus@gmail.com

Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law. All information recorded from the survey will be kept in confidence. Neither your name nor any information identifying you will be used in any written records or reports. Your participation in this project is completely voluntary. At any time during the survey you may refuse to provide information or discontinue your participation without giving a reason and with no negative consequences. If you have questions or concerns regarding your rights as a study participant, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of this study, you may contact my advisor, Dr. Marilyn Amey (amey@msu.edu or 517-432-1056) and or the Human Research Protection Program of Michigan State University (irb@msu.edu or 517-355-2180).

1. Prior to your current appointment as department chair/head, have you previously held the position of department chair/head at your present institution?

○ YES

○ NO

2. Are you presently the department chair/head (Interim, Acting, or Full)?

○ YES

○ NO

3. If "Yes" Select all that apply:

☐ Interim/Acting

☐ Associate/Co-chair

4. How long have you served in your current position (please round to the nearest year)?

○ Less than 1 year

○ 1 year

○ 2 years

○ 3 years

○ 4 or more years

5. Please respond to the following questions and/or statements about YOUR PERCEPTION OF YOUR ROLE.

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
Compared to my predecessor I have made an attempt to redefine my role and change what I am required to do.	○	○	○	○	○
While I am satisfied with my overall job responsibilities, I have altered the procedures for doing by job as compared to my predecessor.	○	○	○	○	○
Compared to my predecessor I have changed the mission or purpose of my role.	○	○	○	○	○
The procedures for performing my job are generally appropriate in my view.	○	○	○	○	○

6. YOUR PERCEPTION OF YOUR ROLE continued...

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
I feel certain about how much authority I have	○	○	○	○	○
Clear, planned goals and objectives exist for my job	○	○	○	○	○
I know that I have divided my time properly	○	○	○	○	○
I know what my responsibilities are	○	○	○	○	○
I know exactly what is expected of me	○	○	○	○	○
Explanation is clear of what has to be done	○	○	○	○	○

7. YOUR PERCEPTION OF YOUR ROLE continued...

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
My new job is well within the scope of my abilities.	○	○	○	○	○
I do not anticipate any problems in adjusting to work in this department.	○	○	○	○	○
I feel I am overqualified for the job I will be doing.	○	○	○	○	○
I have all the technical knowledge I need to deal with my new job, all I need now is practical experience.	○	○	○	○	○
I feel confident that my skills and abilities equal or exceed those of my future colleagues.	○	○	○	○	○

8. YOUR PERCEPTION OF YOUR ROLE

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
My past experiences and accomplishments increase my confidence that I will be able to perform successfully in this institution.	○	○	○	○	○
I could have handled a more challenging job than the one I will be doing.	○	○	○	○	○
Professionally speaking, my new job exactly satisfies my expectations of myself.	○	○	○	○	○

9. Which of the following best describes the nature of your appointment as chair/head?

○ I was appointed by the dean with the consultation and approval of the faculty

○ I was appointed by the dean without meaningful faculty consultation/approval

○ I was elected by the faculty to serve a definite term

○ I was elected by the faculty to serve an indefinite term

○ Other (please specify)

10. Please rate the following statements about your DEPARTMENT:

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
My department is an atmosphere in which there is cooperative effort among individuals to carry out difficult tasks.	○	○	○	○	○
My department is seen as able to produce work of higher quality and quantity than other groups in the institution.	○	○	○	○	○
The faculty who comprise my department take pride in the department.	○	○	○	○	○
Within my department there is open communication and trust among faculty and staff and the atmosphere is characterized by friendly relations.	○	○	○	○	○
Within my department individuals feel the atmosphere is conducive to the expression of individual opinions, ideas, and suggestions.	○	○	○	○	○

11. What is the name of your department?

12. In what college/school is your department housed?

13. What is the total number of regular (full-time & tenure track) faculty members your department employs?

14. Please rate how much each of the following responsibilities is a part of your role as department chair/head:

	Hardly Any				A Good Amount
Departmental representative - Promote a positive image and gain financial support for the department.	○	○	○	○	○
Communication and staff development - Provide feedback to the faculty from the dean and communicate needs of faculty to higher administration.	○	○	○	○	○
Organizer - Engage in planning, allocating faculty responsibilities, and delegating responsibilities equitably.	○	○	○	○	○
Leadership - Stimulate faculty research, teaching, and service, and guide curriculum development.	○	○	○	○	○

15. In what geographic region is your institution located?

○ WEST REGION (Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming)

○ SOUTH REGION (Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia)

○ NORTHEAST REGION (Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont)

○ MIDWEST REGION (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Wisconsin)

16. How much discretion does your present role offer you in each of the following areas:

	Hardly Any				A Good Amount
Freedom to act independently of my immediate supervisor	○	○	○	○	○
Freedom to set my own work objectives/targets	○	○	○	○	○
Freedom to prioritize when different parts of the role are done	○	○	○	○	○
Freedom to choose whom I deal with in order to carry out departmental work	○	○	○	○	○

17. How would you rate the differences between your present and previous jobs in relation to the following areas:

	Completely Different				The Same
The tasks involved	○	○	○	○	○
The skills required for the job	○	○	○	○	○
The methods used to do the job	○	○	○	○	○

18. How much control do you desire in the following work areas:

	Very Little				Very Much
The variety of tasks performed	○	○	○	○	○
Decisions as to when things will be done in the department	○	○	○	○	○
The quality of the faculty's work	○	○	○	○	○
Performance standards in the department	○	○	○	○	○

19. Please respond to the following questions and/or statements about your OWN EFFECTIVENESS over the past year by selecting which rating best represents your judgment.

	Poor	Only So-So	In Between	Good	Outstanding
Attending to essential administrative tasks (e.g., class scheduling, staffing, finances/budgeting, facilities)	○	○	○	○	○
Fostering good teaching in the department (e.g., encourages course updating, use of appropriate technology, attending to student feedback)	○	○	○	○	○
Assisting in securing funding from external sources (e.g., grants, contracts, gifts, partnerships)	○	○	○	○	○
Leading in establishing and monitoring progress on annual or biannual department goals	○	○	○	○	○
Guiding the development of sound procedures for assessing faculty performance	○	○	○	○	○

20. OWN EFFECTIVENESS continued...

	Poor	Only So-So	In Between	Good	Outstanding
Facilitating successful recruitment and selection of promising faculty	○	○	○	○	○
Communicating the department's needs (e.g., personnel, space, monetary, technology) to the dean and other appropriate administrators	○	○	○	○	○
Developing collegiality/cooperation among faculty members	○	○	○	○	○
Stimulating research, scholarly activity, and/or creative endeavors in the department	○	○	○	○	○
Guiding the development of a sound long-range plan to carry out departmental programs	○	○	○	○	○

21. OWN EFFECTIVENESS continued...(almost done)

	Poor	Only So-So	In Between	Good	Outstanding
Promoting a positive image of the department within the campus community	○	○	○	○	○
Fostering the development of each faculty member's special talents or interests	○	○	○	○	○
Ensuring that new faculty and staff are acquainted with departmental procedures, priorities, and expectations	○	○	○	○	○
Clearly communicating expectations of the campus administration to the faculty	○	○	○	○	○
Stimulating or rejuvenating faculty vitality/enthusiasm	○	○	○	○	○

22. OWN EFFECTIVENESS (end of section)

	Poor	Only So-So	In Between	Good	Outstanding
Facilitating curriculum development	○	○	○	○	○
Establishing trust between myself and members of the faculty	○	○	○	○	○
Promoting a positive image of the department to off-campus constituencies	○	○	○	○	○
Rewarding faculty in accordance with their contributions to the department	○	○	○	○	○
Ensuring the assessment of student learning outcomes is meaningful and ongoing	○	○	○	○	○
Actively supporting student recruitment and retention efforts	○	○	○	○	○

23. How much opportunity exists to find out how well you are doing in your job?

○ A minimum amount

○ None

○ A maximum amount

24. Please rate the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
In a decision-making situation in which there is not enough information to process the problem, I feel very uncomfortable.	○	○	○	○	○
I don't like to work on a problem unless there is a possibility of coming out with a clear-cut and unambiguous answer.	○	○	○	○	○
I function very poorly whenever there is a serious lack of communication in a job situation.	○	○	○	○	○
In a situation in which other people evaluate me, I feel a great need for clear and explicit evaluations.	○	○	○	○	○
If I am uncertain about the responsibility of my role, I get very anxious.	○	○	○	○	○
A problem has little attraction for me if I don't think it has a solution.	○	○	○	○	○

25. To whom do you report at your current institution?

○ Chief Executive Officer (e.g., president, chancellor, or equivalent)

○ Chief Academic Officer

○ Vice President/Vice Chancellor

○ Vice Provost

○ Dean

○ Other (please specify)

[   ]

26. How long has the [Q25] served in the position (please round to the nearest year)?

- ○ Less than 1 year
- ○ 1 year
- ○ 2 years
- ○ 3 years
- ○ 4 years
- ○ 5 years
- ○ 6 years
- ○ 7+ years

27. How frequently do you use the following strategies of feedback seeking:

	Very Infrequently				Very Frequently
Ask the [Q25]	○	○	○	○	○
Ask co-workers	○	○	○	○	○
Compare yourself with others	○	○	○	○	○
Observe the characteristics of those praised by the [Q25]	○	○	○	○	○
Pay attention to how the [Q25] and fellow co-workers act toward you and use this as feedback information	○	○	○	○	○

28. To what extent do you find out from the [Q25] how you are doing on the job as you are working?

- ○ Very little, I often work for long stretches without finding out how I am doing
- ○ Moderately, I sometimes know how I am doing and other times I do not
- ○ Very much, I get almost constant "feedback" on my performance as I work

29. How would you rate the overall performance of the [Q25]?

- ○ Poor
- ○ Only So-So
- ○ In Between
- ○ Good
- ○ Outstanding

30. What are the three greatest challenges you have faced during your time as a department chair/head?

a. [   ]

b. [   ]

c. [   ]

31. What are your career aspirations once your time is up as department chair/head?

○ Pursue another term as department chair.

○ Return to full-time faculty work.

○ Apply for a dean position.

○ Apply for another administrative position.

○ Leave higher education altogether.

32. What position/title did you hold prior to serving in your current position?

[   ]

33. How long did you serve in your previous position (please round to the nearest year)?

[   ]

34. What is the highest degree you hold?

○ Bachelor's (B.A., B.S., etc.)

○ Master's (M.A., M.S., M.Ed., M.B.A., etc.)

○ Doctorate (Ph.D., Ed.D., etc.)

○ Professional (J.D., M.D., Psy.D., etc.)

○ Both Doctorate and Professional

○ Other (please specify)

[   ]

35. What is your gender?

○ Male

○ Female

36. Please specify your ethnicity

○ Hispanic or Latino

○ Not Hispanic or Latino

37. From the selections below, please mark one or more boxes indicating the race group (s) with which you most closely identify:

☐ American Indian or Alaska Native

☐ Asian

☐ Black or African American

☐ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

☐ White

APPENDIX B

EMAIL INVITATION TEXT

Initial Email Text

Dear Department Chair:

I am conducting research on department chairs/heads about their perception of their role. The purpose of this research is to understand the factors that most influence the perception a department chair/head has of their job. I invite you to share your experiences by taking this online survey. The survey should take no longer than 20 minutes.

Your help with this study will be immensely important to my research and I value your contribution. If you have any questions about the study, please contact me.

Survey: Role Perceptions of Department Chairs

You indicate your voluntary agreement to participate by submitting this survey.

Timothy G. Campbell
Doctoral Candidate
Michigan State University
(989) XXX-7457 XXXXXX@gmail.com

If you'd like to be taken off this list please hit reply or email XXXXXX@gmail.com and include "Remove" in the subject line.

Reminder Email Text

If you've already received this request and have answered the questionnaire, or do not wish to, please ignore it. Because the survey is completely anonymous I am unable to discover who has and has not taken the survey. I apologize for any inconvenience. There will only be two more reminders.

Dear Department Chair:

I am conducting research on department chairs/heads about their perception of their role. The purpose of this research is to understand the factors that most influence the perception a department chair/head has of their job. I invite you to share your experiences by taking this online survey. The survey should take no longer than 20 minutes.

Your help with this study will be immensely important to my research and I value your contribution.

Survey: Role Perceptions of Department Chairs

If you have questions or concerns regarding your rights as a study participant, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of this study, you may contact my advisor, Dr. Marilyn Amey (XXXX@msu.edu or 517-432-1056) and or the Human Research Protection Program of Michigan State University (irb@msu.edu or 517-355-2180). This study has IRB approval and is project number X11-250.

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Program link: http://www.educ.msu.edu/ead/HALE/phdhale/default.asp

If you'd like to be taken off this list please hit reply or email XXXXXX@gmail.com and include "Remove" in the subject line.

*The reason for the gmail account is for logistic purposes.

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