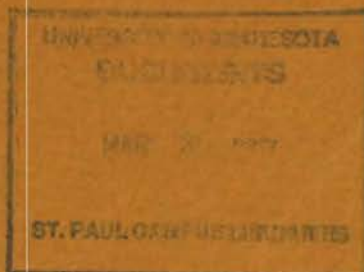


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ROLE EXPECTATIONS IN EXTENSION

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ROLE EXPECTATIONS IN EXTENSION

Mary Cloyd and Charles E. Ramsey

It is common knowledge that people who have the same job in an educational organization such as the extension service perform their roles in quite different ways, even though they may be working under the conditions of the same job description. Such variations exist in part because formal job descriptions are brief, abstract, and omit job requirements which may, on occasion, become of paramount importance. Rewards may be increased or withheld because of success or failure in ways not mentioned in a written job description. Even termination of an employee, it has been shown, frequently is based upon informal requirements not included in a job description.

These informal requirements, called role expectations, are especially troublesome to new personnel because of the manner in which such expectations are communicated. The principle source of knowledge of role expectations comes by way of informal discussion, mainly with peers and clientele, and there are several difficulties with such channels:

1. Some people tend to discount the importance of informal discussion or to depreciate anything learned from such a source.
2. Role definitions communicated through informal discussion are often implicit rather than explicit, or are stated as an "aside" in a conversation actually focused on criticism or compliments aimed at a particular person.
3. Role definitions are frequently stated as unqualified "shoulds" and "should nots", even though such expectations may depend strongly upon constraints and variations in the work situation.
4. The role expectations held by those who are more vocal are the most likely to be heard by new personnel, but the most vocal are often not the most powerful among one's peers. A false impression may result.

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5. The relative isolation of county extension personnel limits access to new definitions of roles as they arise, except for those roles which are communicated through more formal channels such as memos and statements from people in positions of authority. Even long existing expectations, "taken for granted" by more experienced personnel, are problematic in the dispersed setting in which most new extension personnel find themselves.

6. There is disagreement among colleagues on many informal role expectations, and thus a new agent may get a picture of uniformity on a role which is really at issue.

7. And, fundamentally, a person wonders whether codes of conduct communicated in such an unsystematic way can be trusted at all.

Any attempt to change the main channel of information about informal role expectations would be futile; most of our beliefs of what should and should not be come from this same source, since much of culture is learned before an individual is likely to read much. However, the basis on which informal discussion occurs can be improved greatly by eliminating some of the difficulties enumerated above. Since raises, promotions, and terminations are frequently based upon informal expectations, such an effort seems worthwhile. Furthermore, the present writers feel that omissions of responsibility to clientele and to the extension organization can occur as a result of a false assumption that a particular role "belongs to someone else."

The following pages contain a summary of findings of a sample survey of extension personnel regarding informal role expectations. The intent is to stimulate discussion, and to provide data which can allow such discussion to have a more explicit and systematic base than is normally the case.

The survey is based upon a questionnaire sent to 107 members of the extension service in Minnesota and elicited opinions concerning a wide variety of role expectations for each of several extension positions. Thus the data bear upon the question of who is informally expected to be responsible for each role listed in the tables. These data should provide

certain advantages over the type of discussion which was described earlier, but there are also certain limitations:

1. The manuscript and form of the tables is intended as a basis for discussion of role expectations among new agents and as a review for more experienced agents. For this reason, raw data are not presented, although other researchers would, of course, be more interested in such a presentation. Rather, the tables contain simply an indication of how a particular role is related to a particular position. The basis of such summaries will be presented later.

2. The findings here are based upon an equal weighting of each person's response. The advantage of this procedure is that the more vocal person's definition is included, but given no more weight than the non-vocal, and an agent may determine how roles are defined throughout extension rather than among those with whom he or she happens to come in contact. The disadvantage is that the general role definitions are less important to a particular agent than are those from specific people. For example, a particular agent would be more interested in the definitions of his or her particular supervisor than in the definitions of district directors generally.

3. The data serve as a basis for identifying certain problem roles by describing situations in which there is substantial disagreement. While such role conflict can sometimes be solved by decisions by an authority figures, such decisions often do not change informal opinion.

4. The summaries in the tables indicate who is thought to be responsible for each of several roles but not how the responsible persons are to carry out that role. Such information would be most helpful in future research, since means are as important as ends in American culture.

5. The findings of this study will be of declining validity as the years pass. For how long will the present findings be correct representations of informal opinion? The answer cannot be precise. Informal definitions change slowly, but they do change. Some roles in the present study were defined by a sample of extension personnel at two different times with a one year interval between. No change had occurred.

However, insofar as the tables in the present publication are to be used for discussion, such changes as may occur will become evident. Indeed, there could be no greater use for the present findings than to make evident the changes which otherwise would escape the attention of many persons.

6. The findings here, based upon informal opinion, can be compared to more formal statements of job requirements with the advantage of isolating problem areas.

SPECIFIC USE OF THIS BULLETIN

By looking at the tables, a person in any position can determine what is and is not expected of him or her in a given task area by finding the position at the head of the column and reading down the column through the various specified roles. On the other hand, if a particular decision is to be made, the tables can be quite helpful in determining who should have a major input. This can be done by finding the area at the heading of the table, the specific decision or role responsibility concerned, and following across the row to see which positions are expected to be involved.

The discussions associated with each table are not intended to be a substitute for reading the table. Rather than describing each table in detail, we have attempted to find certain patterns that might not be noticed by a person searching for the expectations associated with his or her position or by a person who wishes to get particular people involved in a decision. These patterns differ from one table to another. In one table we may focus the discussion on particular decisions or roles which appear to be problematic to the personnel in extension, while in another table we may give more attention to the contradictory expectations assigned to occupants of a particular position.

The study reported here pertains directly to the extension service in Minnesota. The structure, both formal and informal, differs from state to state suggesting that it may also change through time in Minnesota in important ways. For example, since this study was done the term "extension home economist" has been changed to "county extension agent."

The interpretation of the findings here will be less confusing because no important differences are found in informal expectations for county personnel. However, persons in other states may be able to discover both patterns and problem areas in role expectations through discussion of these findings, just as changes in Minnesota's structure may be better assessed by the same means.

SPECIFIC PROBLEMS AND METHOD

The questionnaire was sent to all members of the state staff, district directors, program directors, and heads of subject matter departments on the St. Paul campus who have extension specialists in the department. The questionnaire was also sent to a random sample of extension specialists and county personnel. The total group consisted of 107 persons, of whom five did not return the questionnaire.

Several problems are considered in the analysis of the data. First, the analysis will determine the particular informal role responsibilities assigned to each of several positions in the extension organization. In those situations in which the responses indicate lack of agreement in role expectations, the second problem of analysis will be concerned with the degree to which these disagreements are polarized and therefore may result in role conflict. The third problem will be to determine the extent to which conflicting expectations are associated with the position of the respondent. For example, the county agents might assign a certain function to the district directors while the program directors or specialists do not expect the district directors to play that role. Attention will also be given, at various points in the analysis, to organizational patterns and problematic situations which are implied by the responses of the role definers.

THE BASIS OF THE TABLES

While the raw data on which the summaries in the tables are based are not presented, it is important to know the criteria by which we concluded that a particular role was assigned to a particular position.

For each of several roles, we asked a question like the following:

14. Which persons should meet directly with local people to do program planning?

<u>One check for each position</u>	Definitely Should	Prefer they Should	Prefer they Should not	Definitely Should not	
County Agent	_____	_____	_____	_____	
County Extension Committee	_____	_____	_____	_____	
College Department Head	_____	_____	_____	_____	If you don't care or can't decide, leave that position unchecked.
District Director	_____	_____	_____	_____	
Extension Director	_____	_____	_____	_____	
Extension Home Economist	_____	_____	_____	_____	
Program Director	_____	_____	_____	_____	
Specialist	_____	_____	_____	_____	

The example question is the first presented in Table 1. To indicate the basis of the summaries, let us take four example patterns.

- A. For the county agent, more than half of the respondents indicated that the agent should meet with local people for program planning and fewer than one-fourth of the remaining respondents opposed this idea. The conclusion is that there is fairly high agreement among the role definers that the county agent should perform this role. Thus a "yes" is indicated in the table.
- B. For the extension director, more than half of the respondents think that he should not be involved in this activity and fewer than one-fourth disagreed with the majority opinion. Thus a "no" is indicated in the table.
- C. For the specialist, over half of the role definers gave a positive response but at least one-fourth expressed the opposite opinion, indicating "role conflict" as specified on the table. At the

minimum, this would predict criticism of the specialists who do get involved in program planning with local people and of those specialists who do not.

- D. For the district director, there was disagreement, but no response was subscribed to by as many as half of the respondents. That is, opinions are more dispersed between the "yes", "no" and "don't care or undecided" responses. The district directors, then, could probably use their own discretion about program planning with local people. Thus, this role is designated as "discretionary".

VALIDITY

A major difficulty in any survey research is to establish validity of the responses to questions; that is for example, if a person checks a response category indicating that the district director should make decisions regarding county budgets, does that respondent really have that preference? Much can be done before the data are gathered to increase the probability that responses will be valid in general. In this study, a considerable amount of discussion was held with persons deeply involved in extension, but also familiar with research methods, in order to increase the probability of obtaining valid data. Then, the recommended pretesting was conducted. However, increasing the probability of validity is not assurance, so it was decided that certain patterns of responses must be obtained in the area of Budgeting or none of the questions could be considered to reveal valid measures of attitudes.

The discussions alluded to, plus the experience of one of the present authors, indicated that three patterns would have to be found in order to trust the remainder of the data. These three patterns were: (a) consensus in expectations that the state staff make budgeting decisions on state wide issues; (b) the district director would be expected to make budgeting decisions at all levels tested in the study; and (c) the specialists would not be expected to be involved in making budgeting decisions at any level. All three patterns were found to be present in the analysis of the responses. These patterns will come as no surprise to persons in extension, but if the patterns had been otherwise the use of them as tests of validity would be inappropriate.

BUDGETARY DECISIONS

Turning now to the more problematic patterns in budgeting, we find that, except for the program directors, the areas of lack of agreement in responses indicate that involvement in certain decisions regarding budget matters could be at the discretion of the person occupying the position rather than a subject of conflict. Especially in the case of county level personnel do we find potential discretionary power, with involvement in half of the decision areas asked about being so defined.

The college department head is generally expected not to have a major voice in budgetary decisions with one exception: a discretionary role in deciding on allocation of limited funds (e.g., for program materials, and for hiring new agents or specialists). Not shown in the table however is a pattern that may introduce another type of role conflict resulting from an association between role expectations and the position of the respondent. All but two of the department heads said that persons in that position should be involved in deciding on allocation of limited funds, and two-thirds felt strongly about the matter. Specialists, most of whom are responsible to extension through a particular academic department, tend to agree with the department heads. Most of the state staff and district directors, the two groups assigned the major responsibility for budget matters, said that the department heads should not make this decision. There was no agreement within any of the other groups of respondents. (P = less than .001; Eta = .51)^{1/}

The role conflict over the involvement of program directors in budget priorities for county programs followed a different pattern. The total group of respondents were in sufficient disagreement as to produce a conflict pattern as we have defined it. However, it was not the program

1. The Eta is presented throughout wherever a significant relationship (.05 level) is found between the position of the respondent in the extension structure and responses on role expectations for any particular position. This inclusion is for the convenience of other researchers interested in this area. A verbal description of the relationship is always included. Probability is determined from the F test.

TABLE 1: Informal Role Expectations in the Area of Budgeting Decisions

Position to which Roles are Assigned

Role Responsibility	County Agent	Ext. Home Economist	Specialist	Program Director	District Director	Extension Director	Coll. Dept. Head	Extension Committee
1. Decide on budget priorities for county programs	yes	yes	no	role conflict	yes	*	no	yes
2. Get additional funding from county commissioners and extension committee	yes	yes	no	no	yes	no	no	*
3. Set the salary of county staff	*	*	no	no	yes	yes	no	yes
4. Decide which counties get paraprofessionals when funds are limited	*	*	no	role conflict	yes	yes	no	*
5. Decide whether limited funds be used for new program materials or hiring new agents or specialists	*	*	no	yes	yes	yes	*	no
6. Decide which training conferences be paid by state	no	no	no	*	yes	yes	no	no

Yes = at least 50% agree that persons in that position should perform that role and fewer than one-fourth disagree.

No = at least 50% agree that persons in that position should not perform that role and fewer than one-fourth disagree.

Role Conflict = at least 50% feel one way and at least 25% oppose this majority.

* = discretionary for the person occupying that position; no pattern of response.

directors themselves who said that they should decide on county budget priorities but rather the department heads and, to a lesser extent, the specialists. Persons in all other positions indicated that program directors should not be so involved. ($P = \text{less than } .001$; $\text{Eta} = .49$) (See Table 1)

The role conflict over involvement of the program directors in the decision as to which counties get para-professionals was not associated with the position of the respondent as was the case for the previous two areas of disagreement; rather, there was disagreement among the occupants of all positions except the department heads who again assigned this role to the program directors.

The district directors and extension director^{2/} are expected to assume most of the responsibilities for budgetary matters. The specialists and department heads are generally expected not to be involved in this area. A limited input is expected from county level personnel and the program directors.

PROGRAM PLANNING

There is perhaps no single area of extension organizational activities which involve so many people or so much time as program planning. In recent decades, new methods of planning have involved the total organization in countless hours and days of learning and applying new approaches. This extensive involvement of the organization personnel is evidenced by the fact that, according to our criteria, persons in every

2. In the subsequent pages, we sometimes use the expression extension director, and sometimes state staff. When we are using the expression to describe a group of respondents, we use the term state staff, since all assistant and associate directors and other personnel with statewide responsibilities responded. However, the questionnaire was worded to assign the informal role expectation to the extension director specifically, even though it is recognized he or she may assign a specific task to another member of the state staff. Department heads are heads of departments at the colleges in St. Paul, not county directors. At the time of the study, the Minnesota Extension Service was changing the roles and titles of county personnel. We therefore have no data regarding the county director. County agent refers to the person who is responsible for agriculture and was usually thought of as male. County extension home economist was thought of as a female and was responsible for the program implied by the title. No data were obtained for persons primarily responsible for 4-H or area agents.

position included in the present study are expected to "introduce new ideas into program planning".

If any term competes with "program planning" for favor in extension it is the notion of "grass roots planning". This notion incorporates joint ventures between professionals and clientele in initiating projects as well as more generalized topic areas of programs. The grass roots notion in planning probably works far less than perfectly, but there are both formal and informal mechanisms for involving clientele in the process. We asked who should meet with local people to plan programs. Only three positions, all at the county level, are clearly assigned this task. Three positions are expected not to be so involved: the department heads, the state extension director and the program directors. This pattern persists with regard to other program planning responsibilities at the county level with the exception that program directors are not clearly excluded from deciding on new county program content or from meeting with county staff for program planning. Our data indicate that these would be discretionary roles for the program directors. It should also be noted that district directors are expected to meet with the county staff for program planning but could probably use their own discretion about participating in other county level program planning responsibilities. (See Table 2.)

The disagreements over program planning responsibilities are not for the most part related to the position of the respondent, but three responsibilities for the specialists are so related, and therefore the most problematic. There is conflict in expectations concerning the involvement of specialists with local people in program planning. Slightly more than half of the respondents, particularly the state staff, program directors, county agents and extension home economists, feel that the specialists should not be so involved. However, a sufficient number of persons have the opposite feeling to consider this a conflict in role expectations. ($P = .04$; $\text{Eta} = .34$) A few specialists do meet with local committees of clientele on occasion, and several specialists use group centered teaching methods which give clientele a considerable voice in the directions a learning situation will take. Both of these devices are greatly limited by subject matter, however. Perhaps the most frequent

TABLE 2: Informal Role Expectations in the Area of Program Planning

Role Responsibility	<u>Position to which Roles are Assigned</u>							
	County Agent	Ext. Home Economist	Specialist	Program Director	District Director	Extension Director	Coll. Dept. Head	Extension Committee
1. Meet with local people to do program planning	yes	yes	role conflict	no	*	no	no	yes
2. Decide on new program content area for the county	yes	yes	*	*	*	no	no	yes
3. Make choice between two county projects	yes	yes	no	no	*	no	no	yes
4. Meet with county staff for program planning	yes	yes	*	*	yes	no	no	yes
5. Decide on new program content area for regional programs	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	*	no	yes
6. Decide on new program content area for state-wide programs	role conflict	*	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no
7. Make choice between two statewide projects	role conflict	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	role conflict	no
8. Introduce ideas in program planning	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

Yes = at least 50% agree that persons in that position should perform that role and fewer than one-fourth disagree.

No = at least 50% agree that persons in that position should not perform that role and fewer than one-fourth disagree.

Role Conflict = at least 50% feel one way and at least 25% oppose this majority.

* = discretionary for the person occupying that position; no pattern of response.

"feedback" method is the informal conversations which occur between specialists and clientele at the myriad of meetings attended or conducted throughout the state.

For the total group of role definers, there is a lack of agreement as to whether the specialists should decide on new county program content or meet with county staff for program planning. In neither case is the disagreement sufficiently polarized to meet our criterion of role conflict but the opinions do vary significantly by position. The program directors, department heads and the specialists themselves are more inclined than persons in the other positions to expect the specialists to be involved in decisions on new county programs. ($P = .002$; $\text{Eta} = .40$) The district directors, program directors and particularly the specialists tend to expect the specialists to meet with county staff for program planning. There is less agreement within the other groups of role definers. ($P = .007$; $\text{Eta} = .32$)

Extension is organized not only around program areas but also in terms of geographical districts, and the pattern of findings in the present study indicates that role expectations differ considerably in a way that corresponds to this geographical structure. The role definers expect persons in most extension positions to be involved in deciding on content for new regional programs with the department head being the only position clearly excluded. But there is a very noticeable separation in responsibilities for program planning between the county and state levels.

The extension director, specialists, program directors, district directors, and department heads are expected to decide on new content for statewide programs. Persons in the same positions are also expected to decide between two statewide projects, with one exception. Although a majority of the respondents assign this role to the department heads there is sufficient opposition to indicate role conflict for this position.

The only position assigned both state and county level program planning responsibilities is that of the district director, but involvement of persons in that position at the county level is clearly expected only with regard to consulting with county staff on program planning.

There is conflict in role expectations for the county agents regarding their involvement in both of the specified statewide programming tasks. Most of the role definers say that the county agents should decide on state level program content, but there was also considerable opposition to this. The extension directors and the county agents themselves are more likely to give positive responses than persons in the other positions. ($P = .04$; $\text{Eta} = .34$) The majority of the respondents do not expect the county agents to choose between two statewide projects, but again there is a significant number of persons who express a contrary opinion. In this case the expectations are not related to the position of the role definer. In general, the findings in this section indicate a close correspondence between the formal structure of extension and informal role expectations. In the main, the occupants of positions whose duties formally involve certain types of decisions are also assigned these decisions informally.

PROGRAM METHODS

Extension personnel are quite conscious of program methods and techniques. In addition to a high degree of commitment to educational impacts, there are other factors which may account for this awareness. The physical and social proximity of agents to the clientele at the county level, and the resulting feedback from unsatisfactory experiences, is doubtless one such factor. Another is the wide diversity of both professional backgrounds and associations which tends to increase awareness of methods and techniques being tried in other educational arenas. The general interest in educational circles in new and perhaps more interesting teaching methods is also found in the particular case of extension.

It is evident that the role definers expect the county agents, the extension home economists and the specialists to assume the major share of the responsibilities for deciding how extension programs and educational materials will be presented and to which audiences. Conversely, the extension director is generally expected not to be involved in this area. Apparently, the county level staff could use their own discretion as to whether or not they write extension bulletins. The specialists are the

only persons who are clearly expected to write these bulletins. There is no agreement as to whether or not the specialists should decide on the use of local experts as teachers. Most of the county agents, extension home economists and department heads say that the specialists should not be involved in this decision, but persons in the other positions do tend to assign this role to the specialists. ($P = .05$; $\text{Eta} = .40$) (See Table 3.)

Differences of opinion are also related to the position of the respondent regarding whether or not department heads should write extension bulletins. The state staff and extension home economists are considerably more likely to expect the department heads to write these bulletins than are any of the other groups. ($P = .003$; $\text{Eta} = .42$) The only responsibility specifically assigned to the department heads, and to the program directors, is deciding whether an extension bulletin needs to be revised. There are conflicting expectations as to the involvement of the program directors in decisions on the use of local experts as teachers. A majority of the respondents say that the program directors should not be so involved, but a significant number expressed the opposite opinion. This role conflict is not attributable to the position of the respondent.

Although the district directors are not expressly assigned any roles in the area of program methods, the greatest amount of discretion in this area applies to that position. The only responsibility they are clearly not expected to assume is that of writing extension bulletins.

Because program methods are mainly matters of technical knowledge and factors in the local situation, the specialists and the county personnel are expected to be heavily involved in nearly all of the phases of decision making in this area. The highest level of agreement reached on any single item is the expectation that specialists will write extension bulletins. Only one person failed to assign that task to the specialists and that person, a specialist, is undecided.

It should be remembered that we are discussing the matter of informal expectations regarding who should have a major voice in decision making. The problem of which program method is to be employed is, unlike the present findings, a source of considerable conflict. This conflict, while often subdued, arises over extreme differences in method such as (a) sole

TABLE 3: Informal Role Expectations in the Area of Program Methods

Role Responsibility	<u>Position to Which Roles are Assigned</u>							
	County Agent	Ext. Home Economist	Specialist	Program Director	District Director	Extension Director	Coll. Dept. Head	Extension Committee
1. Decide how particular program content should be presented to clientele (e.g., lecture, bulletin, group discussion)	yes	yes	yes	*	*	no	no	*
2. Decide who will be the audience for a particular presentation (e.g., local leaders, farmers, youth)	yes	yes	yes	*	*	no	no	yes
3. Decide whether experts in local community be involved in teaching particular content area	yes	yes	*	role conflict	*	no	no	*
4. Decide whether an extension bulletin needs revision	yes	yes	yes	yes	*	*	yes	no
5. Write extension bulletins	*	*	yes	*	no	no	*	no

use of discussion versus lecture, (b) a provocative versus suggestive approach and (c) an approach aimed simply at knowledge and understanding as opposed to attempts to change behavior.

RESPONSIBILITY IN TEACHING

Closely associated with concerns with program methods is the question of who shall have teaching responsibilities in various situations. In the context of extension, printed bulletins is one manner in which teaching occurs, but in the present study we considered only direct presentations.

The assignment of responsibilities in the area of teaching is relatively clearly defined. In single or multiple county situations, there is consensus: county staff and specialists are expected to teach clientele, but persons in the other positions are not assigned these roles. A similar pattern is found regarding the responsibility to interpret research findings for lay clientele.

The specialists are the only persons who are clearly expected to teach clientele in statewide situations. This appears to be a discretionary role for all other positions except the extension committee which is not expected to be involved. There are some notable differences of opinion, however, as to whether or not the extension director and program directors should teach on the statewide level. The specialists and department heads are considerably less inclined than the other groups of respondents to assign this role to the program directors. ($P = .02$; $\text{Eta} = .34$) It should also be noted that there are conflicting expectations among the program directors themselves. Almost two-thirds of this group say they prefer that program directors should do statewide teaching; the others feel that they definitely should not.

The county agents and the state staff themselves are far more inclined than the other role definers to expect the extension director to teach in statewide situations. The majority of the district directors and program directors are opposed to this but there is no agreement within the other groups. ($P = .003$; $\text{Eta} = .45$) (See Table 4)

There is extensive discussion of methods during program planning meetings in Extension. Much of this discussion rests on which specialists

TABLE 4: Informal Role Expectations in the Area of Teaching

Role Responsibility	<u>Position to Which Roles are Assigned</u>							
	County Agent	Ext. Home Economist	Specialist	Program Director	District Director	Extension Director	Coll. Dept. Head	Extension Committee
1. Decide which specialists be involved in presenting a particular program	yes	yes	yes	yes	role conflict	no	*	no
2. Interpret research findings for lay clientele	yes	yes	yes	*	no	no	no	no
3. Teach clientele in single county	yes	yes	yes	no	no	no	no	no
4. Teach clientele in multiple county situation	yes	yes	yes	no	no	no	no	no
5. Teach clientele in statewide situation	*	*	yes	*	*	*	*	no

shall present educational material in a particular program. Responsibility for making this decision is assigned to the county staff, the specialists and the program directors. The involvement of the district directors in this decision is questionable, with a conflict in role assignment indicated.

The district director's position is the only one which is assigned heavy involvement both on the campus, where the specialist's reputation for expertise is known, and in the county, where the reputation for effectiveness is defined. Why, then, should the district directors not clearly be assigned major responsibility for selecting specialists? Since their responsibilities are divided between the campus and the county, the district directors are probably less involved at either place than those who are on campus or in the county most of the time. Thus, those role definers who emphasize expertise might be less inclined to assign responsibility for the selection of specialists to the district director, while those who emphasize local reaction to a specialist might be more likely to make such a role assignment. The data indicates that the specialists and department heads, the two groups likely to be most concerned with expertise, are the least likely to expect the district directors to be involved in the selection of specialists for program presentations. The majority of the other respondents do assign this role to the district directors.

There is a very high degree of agreement among the role definers that extension teaching is the province of the county agents, the extension home economists and, particularly, the specialists. Extension committee members are not expected to teach in any situation unless they are, in other respects, considered to be local experts. The extension director and department heads are also generally excluded from extension teaching. Role expectations for the district directors and program directors are less consistent and involve a greater amount of disagreement.

RESEARCH

Of all the extension activities included in the present study, certain types of research comprise the newest area of emphasis. There

has always been a great deal of concern with the quality and effectiveness of extension programs, especially the applicability of general recommendations to the local situation (e.g., demonstration plots). However, consistent with a general trend in many public and private organizations, more rigorous evaluation of methods and personnel is gaining increasing support.

The relatively recent emphasis on some dimensions of research may account for the extensive diffusion of role expectations among the various positions or, to put it another way, the few instances in which research related responsibilities are clearly not assigned to a given position. Indeed, everyone in extension is expected to bring problems that need study to the attention of researchers.

The county agents and extension home economists are expected to be involved in all of the designated research functions. The specialists, program directors and district directors are also expected to be extensively involved. There is role conflict as to whether or not the specialists should actually conduct evaluation studies. Although a majority of the role definers say yes, there is also a considerable amount of opposition. Opinions do not vary significantly by the position of the role definer. (See Table 5.)

Program directors are expected to design evaluation studies of extension programs in general, but there are conflicting expectations about their involvement in this activity when it applies to a program at the county level. Most of the role definers think that the program directors should be so involved, but half of the program directors themselves are opposed. A significant amount of opposition is also expressed by the two groups of county staff and the specialists. ($P = .002$; $\text{Eta} = .33$)

There is no agreement as to whether or not the program directors should conduct applied research. All of the state staff say yes and the district directors tend to agree with them. The specialists are generally the most opposed to the program directors conducting applied research. ($P = .04$; $\text{Eta} = .35$) This finding and certain other patterns of response, indicate that specialists seem to view program directors more as administrators than do persons in other positions.

TABLE 5: Informal Role Expectations in the Area of Research

Position to Which Roles are Assigned

Role Responsibility	County Agent	Ext. Home Economist	Specialist	Program Director	District Director	Extension Director	Coll. Dept. Head	Extension Committee
1. Bring problems that need study to attention of researchers	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
2. Design evaluation studies of extension programs in general	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	*	*
3. Design evaluation study of a county program	yes	yes	yes	role conflict	yes	*	no	role conflict
4. Decide whether a program needs to be revised	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	*	*	yes
5. Decide effectiveness of an educational presentation	yes	yes	yes	yes	*	*	*	*
6. Conduct evaluation studies	yes	yes	role conflict	yes	yes	*	no	*
7. Conduct applied research as subjects of interest arise	yes	yes	yes	*	no	no	*	no

As was the case with the program directors, there are conflicting expectations regarding the involvement of the extension committee in designing evaluations of county programs. Half of the respondents feel that the extension committee should play this role but many persons are opposed. The specialists, and particularly the county staff, the groups most opposed to the involvement of the program director in this activity, are the most favorable regarding the involvement of the extension committee. ($P = .03$; $\text{Eta} = .44$)

All but three extension positions are assigned extensive responsibilities in the area of research. Even for those three exceptions, the extension director, department heads and extension committee, there are very few instances where the role definers actually oppose involvement. This area, then, can be characterized as having a minimal degree of role specialization.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

The success of extension programs or projects is often contingent upon the inputs of, and cooperation with, other organizations. One of the problems extension must deal with, then, is deciding who will have the responsibility for various types of relationships with external groups or agencies.

The results in this area are similar to the pattern we found in the area of program planning, that is, the informal expectations for specialization of roles are consistent with the formal structure of extension. County personnel are the only ones assigned responsibility for obtaining approval of local power figures, obtaining cooperation of local agencies for extension programs, and preparing reports for county agencies. The only exception to this is that the involvement of the extension committee in preparing reports for county agencies is discretionary.

None of the three county-based positions are expected to be involved in relationships with other organizations at the regional or state level. Rather, the specialists and program directors are assigned all of these responsibilities: enlisting the cooperation of other state agencies and preparing reports for both regional and state agencies. The state staff

members are also expected to be involved in enlisting the cooperation of other statewide agencies, the only role assigned to this position. It appears that the extension directors could use their own discretion about preparing reports for state and regional agencies. However, it should be noted that none of the persons in this position assigned either of these responsibilities to themselves. (See Table 6.)

Department heads are not clearly expected to be involved in relationships with other organizations at any level. Although it is generally agreed that they be excluded from such relationships at the county and regional level, they apparently could use their own discretion about involvement on a statewide basis.

The greatest amount of disagreement in role expectations in this area occurs with respect to the district director. The only role for which there is agreement is that the district directors should prepare reports on extension projects for other regional agencies. In regard to obtaining cooperation from, and making reports to, county agencies, there is neither a positive nor a negative majority opinion among the respondents. The district directors could then probably use their own discretion about becoming involved in these relationships. However, there is role conflict as to whether district directors should ask local power figures to approve extension programs, and concerning their involvement in both of the specified types of relationships with state agencies. Most of the role definers said that the district directors should have these responsibilities, but a substantial number are also opposed, resulting in the role conflict for all three responsibilities. The conflicting role expectations are not significantly related to the position of the respondent in any of these cases. However, the district directors themselves tend to agree with the majority opinion that they should obtain cooperation from state wide agencies, but only about one-third of them feel that they should prepare reports for these agencies.

In the area of relationships with other organizations, there is consensus that the county personnel should have these responsibilities at the county level and that the specialists and program directors should be heavily involved at the state and regional level. It is also agreed that

TABLE 6: Informal Role Expectations in the Area of Relationships with other Organizations

Role Responsibility	<u>Position to Which Roles are Assigned</u>							
	County Agent	Ext. Home Economist	Specialist	Program Director	District Director	Extension Director	Coll. Dept. Head	Extension Committee
1. Ask local power figures to approve extension programs	yes	yes	no	no	role conflict	no	no	yes
2. Enlist cooperation of other local agency for extension program	yes	yes	no	no	*	no	no	yes
3. Prepare report on extension project for county agency	yes	yes	no	no	*	no	no	*
4. Prepare report on extension project for regional agency	*	*	yes	yes	yes	*	no	no
5. Enlist cooperation of other state agency for extension project	*	*	yes	yes	role conflict	yes	*	no
6. Prepare report on extension project for statewide agency	*	*	yes	yes	role conflict	*	*	no

the district directors should be involved at the regional level and that the extension director has some input at the state level. The separation of role responsibilities in this area, then, tends to reflect the formal structure of extension. The relatively extensive amount of disagreement in role expectations for the district directors probably also reflects their general dispersion of responsibilities at all three levels.

RESOLUTION OF CONFLICT

Extension has a long standing philosophy of operating on the basis of consensus. One interpretation of the consensus model of decision making is that agreement on how things should be done will prevail and, since conflict is tabu, it does not exist and is therefore not a problem. An alternative, and we would argue, more realistic interpretation is that conflict will occur in any organization but that where consensus is highly valued there will be rather clearly established norms for resolving those conflicts. The results of this study are more consistent with this second interpretation. The questions we asked do not refer to mechanisms for resolving conflicts but rather who should or should not be involved in resolving certain types of conflict.

Interpersonal conflicts among the county staff are expected to be resolved by persons in those positions and by the district directors, that is, those persons who are most involved in county matters. All other extension positions are clearly expected not to participate in settling these disputes.

Role expectations for resolving conflicts between departments over subject matter jurisdiction are almost exactly the reverse of what was found in regard to conflicts among county staff. The extension director, program directors and department heads are expected to resolve conflicts over subject matter jurisdiction. All other positions are excluded except specialists for whom this appears to be a discretionary role. Since specialists are identified with a particular subject matter, their involvement in settling such conflicts may hinge on whether or not their specialized area is the subject of dispute. (See Table 7.)

TABLE 7. Informal Role Expectations in the Area of Conflict Resolution

Role Responsibility	<u>Position to Which Roles are Assigned</u>							
	County Agent	Ext. Home Economist	Specialist	Program Director	District Director	Extension Director	Coll. Dept. Head	Extension Committee
1. Resolve interpersonal conflicts among county staff	yes	yes	no	no	yes	no	no	no
2. Resolve jurisdictional conflicts between positions in extension (e.g., dist. dir., prog. dir., county staff and specialist)	no	*	*	*	*	yes	*	no
3. Resolve conflicts that arise between departments over subject matter jurisdiction	no	no	*	yes	no	yes	yes	no

There is less agreement in role expectations in regard to resolving conflicts between extension positions than is the case for the previous two types of conflict. The only person who is definitely assigned this role is the extension director. The county agents and the extension committee are expected not to be involved. The data indicate that this would be a discretionary role for persons in all the other positions. It may be that the input of these persons in resolving jurisdictional conflicts between extension positions would depend on which positions are involved.

Two points should be made about these discretionary roles concerning resolution of conflict between positions within extension. First, expectations for the district director differ according to the position of the role definer. The state staff and extension home economists are more inclined than the other groups to assign this role to the district director. The most opposition comes from the program directors and particularly the district directors themselves. ($P = .02$; $\text{Eta} = .35$)

Second, throughout the present analysis, we have found that role expectations for the county agents and the extension home economists are almost always the same. The role of resolving conflicts between positions is one of the few exceptions, and this is probably due to the criteria we established for agreement or disagreement as much as it would be the result of any substantial differences in opinions. Forty-nine percent of the respondents feel that the extension home economists should not resolve this conflict; most of the others are undecided. This is very similar to the responses regarding the county agents, but for this latter group, a slight majority expressed a negative opinion. Whether this would be a discretionary role for the extension home economists, then, is questionable. We attempted to select criteria which minimize marginal cases; this role is one of the few exceptions.

It is interesting that in no case was there role conflict over who should resolve conflict. The long standing cultural reinforcement of conformity and the resulting distaste for conflict found among members of a consensus organization may explain this pattern.

SELECTION OF PERSONNEL

The roles which are considered in this area are concerned with the selection of personnel for only three extension positions: specialists, program directors and district directors. Role expectations for the state staff and the extension committee are quite clear. The state staff is expected to be involved in all of the specified decisions on personnel selection and the extension committee is not expected to be involved in any of these decisions. It should be noted that the county staff are the only other persons clearly excluded from any of these responsibilities, specifically, the decision on which specialist candidates will be hired.

The department heads are assigned all personnel selection roles that are concerned with specialists and program directors but there is no agreement as to whether or not they should be involved in the screening or selection of candidates for district directors.

There is a considerable amount of disagreement about personnel selection responsibilities for the county staff, specialists, program directors and district directors. The remainder of the analysis in this section will focus on several situations in which the differing opinions are related to the position of the role definer. In only one instance is the disagreement polarized to the extent that we have defined it as role conflict and this occurs in regard to the involvement of the extension home economists in screening program director candidates. Most of the respondents say that the extension home economists should be on this screening committee but there is also a significant amount of opposition, particularly from the program directors. Concerning the involvement of both groups of county staff in deciding what new specialists are needed, about two-thirds of each group assign this role to themselves and the district directors tend to agree, but the state staff, college department heads and particularly the specialists tend to be opposed to this. The responses within the other positions are more dispersed. ($P = .001$; $\text{Eta} = .56$) (The data are almost identical concerning the role for county agents and the extension home economists.) (See Table 8)

The only role in the area of personnel selection that is specifically assigned to the specialists is that of screening program director

TABLE 8: Informal Role Expectations in the Area of Personnel Selection

Role Responsibility	<u>Position to Which Roles are Assigned</u>							
	County Agent	Ext. Home Economist	Specialist	Program Director	District Director	Extension Director	Coll. Dept. Head	Extension Committee
1. Be on screening committee for new Program Director	yes	role conflict	yes	*	yes	yes	yes	no
2. Be on screening committee for new District Director	yes	yes	*	yes	yes	yes	*	no
3. Decide what new specialists are needed	*	*	*	yes	yes	yes	yes	no
4. Select new Program Director among candidates	*	*	*	*	*	yes	yes	no
5. Select new District Director among candidates	*	*	*	*	*	yes	*	no
6. Decide which of the specialist candidates will be hired	no	no	*	yes	*	yes	yes	no

candidates. However, opinions differ to some extent according to the position of the respondents as to whether or not the specialists should be on such a screening committee for new district directors. All but one of the state staff and program directors say yes and most of the department heads agree with this. Opinions are more divided among the other groups of role definers ($P = .02$; $\text{Eta} = .36$)

Program directors are clearly expected to make personnel selection decisions that apply to new specialists and they are also expected to be on the screening committee for new district directors. There is no agreement, however, as to whether program directors should be on the screening committee for candidates for their own position. The state staff, district directors and especially the program directors themselves are considerably more inclined than the other groups of role definers to assign this role to the program directors. ($P = .059$; $\text{Eta} = .44$)

District directors are expected to be involved in the preliminary decisions for selection of all three types of personnel considered in this study but there is no agreement about their involvement in any of the final selections. The county agents and extension home economists are more inclined than the other groups of role definers to expect the district directors to participate in the final selection of a new program director. None of the department heads and only one member of the state staff expressed a favorable opinion. Among the other groups of role definers, opinions are more divided. ($P = .004$; $\text{Eta} = .48$) The county staff are also more inclined than the other respondents to expect the district director to be involved in decisions as to which specialist candidates will be hired. Again, the state staff is generally opposed to this. Most of the program directors and the specialists also expressed negative opinions. There is no agreement among the department heads or district directors. ($P = .01$; $\text{Eta} = .48$) Regarding the participation of the district directors in the selection of candidates for their own position, opinions do not differ significantly by the position of the role definer.

Except for the extension director and extension committee, there appears to be a considerable amount of uncertainty as to who should be involved in various kinds of decisions in the area of personnel selection.

Two types of evidence support this generalization. First, there are a relatively large number of "discretionary" roles indicated in Table 8. Second, in many instances, we found a rather high rate of "undecided" responses. It would seem, then, that responsibilities for selection of personnel in extension is an area that needs clarification.

PERSONNEL TRAINING

The duties of county and area personnel involve attendance at educational meetings they have arranged for clientele, and as a result, much of the work is, in effect, educational experience for the agents. To a somewhat lesser extent, district directors also experience such education as a side effect of their attendance at meetings in their districts. In addition, considerable effort is made to give in-service training and education to all extension personnel, including all day meetings, district conferences, an annual statewide conference and a week long conference in May during which a large percentage of the staff take instruction in several subjects. In this type of personnel development, the Extension Service is probably more heavily involved than most organizations with which the present writers are familiar. Little distinction is made between "training" and "education" in these in-service situations in Minnesota.

As in the case of personnel selection, one of the important patterns of the findings in the area of personnel training is a large degree of discretionary power left to the persons occupying several of the positions. There are some clear-cut expectations however. Looking first at positions, extension committee members are not expected to be involved in personnel training in any way while, specialists are expected to be involved in all of the specified situations. These expectations conform to practice.

County personnel often specialize in one area, although the position calls for a generalist, and they present educational material much as specialists are expected to do as a central part of their job. This training function of the county staff is reflected in the informal expectation that they train local volunteer leaders, but other responsibilities of county staff in the area of personnel training are discretionary. (See Table 9.)

TABLE 9: Informal Role Expectations in the Area of Personnel Training

Role Responsibility	<u>Position to Which Roles are Assigned</u>							
	County Agent	Ext. Home Economist	Specialist	Program Director	District Director	Extension Director	Coll. Dept. Head	Extension Committee
1. Conduct training for local program leaders	yes	yes	yes	*	*	no	no	no
2. Conduct professional improvement training for county staff	*	*	yes	yes	yes	*	*	no
3. Keep county staff up-to-date on program methods	*	*	yes	yes	yes	*	*	no
4. Interpret research findings for county staff	*	*	yes	*	role conflict	no	*	no

Program directors and district directors are expected to conduct professional improvement training for county staff and also keep county staff up-to-date on program methods. Training local leaders would be a discretionary role for both positions. Program directors apparently could also use their own discretion about interpreting research for county staff but there are conflicting expectations about the involvement of the district directors in this activity. Most of the role definers feel that the district directors should not have this responsibility but a substantial number, especially the state staff, do expect the district directors to interpret research for the county staff. In general, opinions did not differ significantly by the position of the respondent.

Expectations do vary by position regarding the involvement of the extension director in keeping county staff up-to-date on program methods. Most of the county agents are in favor of this; the program directors and district directors are the most opposed. Opinions within the other groups, including the state staff, are divided. ($P = .02$; $\text{Eta} = .42$)

None of the department heads assign any of the personnel training roles to their own position. In each case, almost half of them think that they should not be involved in personnel training and the others are undecided. The opinions of the other role definers differ significantly by position but not in the same way in all cases. The county agents and extension home economists are the most likely to expect the department heads to conduct professional improvement training for county staff. The program directors and the district directors are the most opposed. ($P = .02$; $\text{Eta} = .45$) They are also generally opposed to having the department heads keep county staff up-to-date on program methods as are most of the state staff and program directors. Opinions among the county agents are divided. ($P = .001$; $\text{Eta} = .45$)

The district directors and extension home economists are the two groups most in favor of having the department heads interpret research findings for the county staff. The program directors tend to oppose this. Expectations are more variable among the other role definers. ($P = .003$; $\text{Eta} = .50$)

Considering the relatively large percentage of discretionary roles found in this area, we could infer that, similar to the area of personnel

selection, there is a significant lack of clarification of responsibilities for personnel training in extension.

PROFESSIONAL ADVANCEMENT

Important concerns for people in most jobs are not only about the criteria used in evaluating performance, but also about who will apply those criteria in making decisions on rewards and promotions. In this section we have included role items referring to the latter problem for the county staff, specialists, program directors and district directors. In addition, we have given some attention to who should be involved in providing opportunities for professional advancement for the county staff.

Since the extension director is the top level administrator of the extension organization, it is not surprising that persons in this position are expected to have a major share of the responsibilities for professional advancement of extension personnel. The only exception is the question of who should take the initiative in agents taking advanced degrees. The data indicate that this should be the joint responsibility of the agents themselves and the district directors. In fact, the district directors are expected to be involved in any professional advancement matters that pertain to the county staff.

The only other role specifically assigned to the county agent is that of deciding which agents are to go for advanced degrees. It should be mentioned that, at the time this study was conducted, no extension home economist was an "administrative agent" in a county office. The difference in responses to this item concerning the two county staff positions is based not on subject matter or sex but on the responsibility of the administrative agent to see that all functions are performed. We posit this explanation because this is one of the very few situations where role expectations differed for these two positions. (See Table 10)

There is a greater amount of disagreement in role expectations in the area of professional advancement than in any other area included in this study. In no case is the disagreement polarized to the extent that, according to our criteria of a majority positive or negative opinion and at least 24 percent dissenting, the disagreement would be defined as

TABLE 10: Informal Role Expectations in the Area of Professional Advancement

Position to Which Roles are Assigned

<u>Role Responsibility</u>	<u>County Agent</u>	<u>Ext. Home Economist</u>	<u>Specialist</u>	<u>Program Director</u>	<u>District Director</u>	<u>Extension Director</u>	<u>Coll. Dept. Head</u>	<u>Extension Committee</u>
1. Take initiative in agents taking advanced degrees	yes	yes	*	*	yes	*	*	*
2. Advise agents of professional training opportunities	*	*	*	yes	yes	yes	*	no
3. Decide which agents are to go for advanced degrees	yes	*	no	*	yes	yes	no	*
4. Decide on raises and promotions for county staff	*	*	no	*	yes	yes	no	yes
5. Decide on raises and promotions for specialists	no	no	*	yes	*	yes	yes	no
6. Decide on raises and promotions for program directors	no	no	*	*	*	yes	*	no
7. Decide on raises and promotions for district directors	*	no	no	*	*	yes	*	no

conflict. Rather, the nature of the lack of agreement led to a designation of these roles as discretionary for the specified positions. In most instances, opinions do not differ to any great extent from one position to another, but there are a few interesting exceptions.

Regarding the involvement of the program directors in decisions as to which county agents will go for advanced degrees, most of the program directors themselves say they should not have this responsibility and the district directors tend to agree with this. The department heads are the most inclined to assign this role to the program directors. ($P = .056$; $\text{Eta} = .39$)

The program directors do tend to think that they should be involved in decisions on raises and promotions for district directors, and most of the department heads have the same opinion. The district directors, however, tend to be more opposed to this than any other group of respondents. ($P = .001$; $\text{Eta} = .47$)

Concerning the involvement of the district directors in decisions on raises and promotions of specialists, the most opposition comes from both the district directors and the specialists. The program directors are also less inclined than the other respondents to expect the district directors to be involved in this decision. ($P = .01$; $\text{Eta} = .46$)

It is evident that the extension director and his staff are expected to be involved in almost all decisions regarding professional advancement. When these decisions affect the county staff, the district directors are also expected to be involved. Specialists are not specifically assigned any of these responsibilities. Persons in the other extension positions are expected to make decisions on professional advancement only to a limited extent, but all positions except the state staff appear to have some discretionary roles in this area.

PERCEPTION OF ROLE STRAIN

Informal role expectations, as the term implies, are typically not made explicit in the formal, written job descriptions for organizational positions though there may well be a considerable amount of congruence between the two. It is a commonly accepted generalization that most people experience some degree of role strain in relation to their jobs.

One source of this role strain would be a lack of consistency between informal and formal role expectations. Another contributing factor would be the inadequate communication of either formal or informal role expectations.

In this study, we attempted to determine the extent of three dimensions of role strain experienced by extension personnel. The first dimension is defined as ambiguity, that is, a lack of clarity in various job related factors such as responsibilities, accountability and evaluation of performance. The second dimension is role conflict; a perception of contradictory or incompatible role expectations. The third dimension is role overload, meaning that the person simply has too much work to do, making it difficult or even impossible to meet all of the job obligations.^{3/}

Role Ambiguity

The findings in this section indicate that extension personnel experience very little role ambiguity. At least most of the time, a large majority of the respondents know what their job responsibilities are, how much authority they have, where to get necessary information, and to whom they are responsible. For four of the items, none of the respondents checked either the "seldom" or "almost never" categories, and in each case less than fourteen percent checked the "sometimes" category. (See Table 11.)

In one situation, however, the criteria used for evaluation of job performance, we found a relatively high degree of ambiguity. This would be consistent with our findings on informal role expectations in the area of professional advancement which included questions of who should be involved in decisions on raises and promotions. We found a higher rate of discretionary roles (indicating lack of agreement in role expectations) in that area than in any other role area considered in the study. If there is some disagreement as to who will be involved in job evaluations, it is

3. The items used in this study to measure the three types of role strain were adapted from a scale developed by Robert L. Kahn, et.al., presented in their book, Organizational Stress: Studies in Role Conflict and Ambiguity, John Wiley and Sons, New York, 1964.

TABLE 11: Perceptions of Role Ambiguity

	<u>almost always</u>	<u>most of the time</u>	<u>sometimes</u>	<u>seldom</u>	<u>almost never</u>
1. Job responsibilities are clear.	32.4	60.8	6.8	0.0	0.0
2. Know how much authority you have.	27.5	58.8	13.7	0.0	0.0
3. Know what evaluation criteria supervisor uses	4.0	28.7	33.7	20.8	12.9
4. Able to get necessary information to do your job well.	22.8	63.4	13.8	0.0	0.0
5. Know to whom you are responsible	44.6	49.5	5.9	0.0	0.0

also likely that there will be considerable ambiguity about the criteria used in those evaluations.

Role Conflict

Compared to the findings in regard to role ambiguity, the degree of role conflict expressed by the respondents is somewhat higher, but still does not appear to be a serious problem among extension personnel. A large majority of the respondents say that they "sometimes" or "seldom" perceive contradictions in role expectations regardless of where those contradictions might emerge. (See Table 12) In all five of the specified situations, less than eight percent of the respondents experience frequent role conflict and no one indicated that they experienced role conflict constantly.

In the discussion of role ambiguity above, it was pointed out that the most problematic issue in that context of role strain is the perceived clarity of criteria used in evaluation of job performance. Yet in the context of role conflict, 71 percent of the respondents say that, in their opinion, the criteria used in evaluation is seldom or almost never wrong. It should be remembered that with respect to ambiguity we asked the respondents if they know what evaluation criteria are used; concerning role conflict we asked their opinion about the appropriateness of those criteria. The findings suggest that, although there is a significant amount of uncertainty regarding evaluation criteria, to the extent that extension personnel know who they are evaluated, they tend to agree that proper criteria are applied. (See Table 12.)

Role Overload

The findings indicate that there is a considerably higher degree of role overload among extension personnel than was the case for either ambiguity or role conflict. There are some marked differences, however, in the extent to which different types of role overload occur. Very few of the respondents feel that a lack of either sufficient authority or qualifications to meet the responsibilities of their jobs are constant or even frequent problems. Rather, the role overload is primarily a matter of having too much to do in too many places and not enough time to do the work well or even get it done at all. Forty-two percent of the respondents

TABLE 12: Perceptions of Role Conflict

	<u>con-</u> <u>stantly</u>	<u>fre-</u> <u>quently</u>	<u>sometimes</u>	<u>seldom</u>	<u>almost</u> <u>never</u>
1. People you work with make contradictory demands.	0.0	7.9	43.6	33.6	14.9
2. Colleague expectations contradict your perception of your responsibilities	0.0	5.0	34.7	47.5	12.8
3. Clientele expectations contradict your perception of your job responsibilities	0.0	5.9	41.6	41.6	7.9
4. Expectations of colleagues and clientele are contradictory	0.0	7.9	42.6	41.6	7.9
5. In your opinion, the wrong criteria are used in evaluating you.	0.0	5.6	23.3	58.9	12.2

TABLE 13: Perceptions of Role Overload

	<u>con-</u> <u>stantly</u>	<u>fre-</u> <u>quently</u>	<u>sometimes</u>	<u>seldom</u>	<u>almost</u> <u>never</u>
1. Amount of work inter- feres with how well it gets done.	12.9	32.7	48.5	5.9	0.0
2. You have too little authority to fulfill responsibilities.	1.0	7.9	23.8	47.5	19.8
3. You are asked to do things you don't feel qualified to handle.	0.0	3.0	47.5	41.6	7.9
4. Difficult to meet colleague/client demands because you can't be in two places at once.	1.0	21.8	53.5	19.8	4.0
5. You don't have enough time to meet all demands made on you.	9.9	41.6	41.6	4.0	3.0

say that the frequently do not have enough time to meet all the demands made on them. Approximately ten percent indicate that a lack of sufficient time is constantly with them. Almost half of the respondents feel that the amount of work they have to do constantly or frequently interferes with how well it gets done. Not being able to meet colleague or client demands because they cannot be in two places at once is somewhat less problematic but a majority of the respondents say that this sometimes occurs and almost one-fourth of them seem to consider it a serious problem. (See Table 13)

In general, extension personnel tend to think that they have the qualifications and the authority needed to do what is expected of them in their jobs. They do tend to feel that the amount of work they have to do is excessive in relation to the amount of time available and that consequently, compromises in the quality of the work done are sometimes necessary.

DISCUSSION

The foregoing analysis focused primarily on the informal role expectations, in ten different areas of responsibilities, for the various extension positions. We found that persons in each position are expected to be heavily involved in some role areas but only to a limited extent, or not at all, in other areas. A summary of the major role areas for each extension position is presented in Table 14. It should be noted that one list of such roles is specified for the combined county agent and extension home economist positions since the role expectations for these two groups are virtually the same.

There are some notable similarities in the areas of role responsibility for the county staff and the specialists. Persons in these positions are expected to be mainly responsible for planning, implementation and evaluation of extension programs. Some type of program planning is expected of everyone in extension except the department heads and responsibility for research is also assigned to some of the other positions. The county staff and the specialists, however, are the only positions for which teaching and making decisions on program methods are primary roles.

TABLE 14: Primary Roles for Each Extension Position

County Agent and Extension Home Economist

Budgeting Decisions at the county level
 Program Planning at the county, regional
 levels
 Program Methods
 Teaching
 Research
 Relationships with other Organizations
 at the county level

District Director

Budgeting Decisions
 Program Planning at the Regional,
 state levels
 Research
 Personnel Selection (Preliminary
 decisions)
 Personnel Training
 Professional Advancement of county
 staff

Department Head

Personnel Selection, Special-
 ists and Program Directors

Extension Committee

Budgeting Decisions at the
 county level
 Program Planning at the county,
 regional levels

Extension Director

Budgeting Decisions, statewide
 Program Planning, state level
 Resolution of Conflict
 Personnel Selection
 Professional Advancement

Specialist

Program Planning at the regional,
 state levels
 Program Methods
 Teaching
 Research
 Relationships with other Organizations
 at the regional, state levels
 Personnel Training

Program Director

Program Planning at the regional,
 state levels
 Research
 Relationships with other Organizations
 at the regional, state levels
 Personnel Training
 Decisions that pertain to Specialists
 which ones will be involved in
 teaching; recruitment, evaluation

There are also some important differences in these roles for the county staff and the specialists. Consistent with the formal structure of extension, the county staff is expected to be concerned mainly with responsibilities within the county while the orientation of the specialists for similar responsibilities would be toward the regional and state levels. This is particularly the case for relationships with other organizations. Both the county staff and the specialists, however, are expected to be involved in program planning at the regional level.

Personnel training is an extensive role responsibility for the specialists but not for the county staff or for persons in any other extension position. The county staff also has one responsibility which the specialists do not have, that is, making budgeting decisions, but for agents this is restricted to the county level.

According to the informal role expectations elicited in this study, the job of the specialist includes responsibilities that would be almost exclusively of a professional nature. The job of the county staff would be more of a combination of professional and administrative responsibilities. In fact, the county staff members are assigned at least one role in each of the ten role areas considered in this study. The specialists are not expected to be involved in any way in the areas of budgeting decisions, resolution of conflict or decisions on professional advancement for persons other than themselves as individuals.

Major responsibilities for the program director are in the areas of program planning and relationships with other organizations at the regional and state levels, research, personnel training and decisions that pertain to specialists: which specialists will be involved in teaching particular extension programs, which new specialist candidates will be hired, and decisions on raises and promotions of specialists. However, the job of the program director is almost as diversified as the jobs of the county agent and the extension home economists. Like the county staff, the program directors are expected to be involved in all of the ten role areas although in some of those areas, their involvement would be minimal.

The informal role expectations indicate that the district director and state staff positions would be primarily administrative although the

specific roles for these two positions vary to some extent within role areas. The extension director (and his staff) is expected to make only statewide budgeting decisions while the district directors are expected to be involved in all of the specified budgeting decisions. In regard to personnel selection and professional advancement, however, the roles of the district director are more restricted than those of the extension director and the state staff. The district directors are expected to be on the screening committees for new program directors and district directors and to decide which new specialists are needed. In addition to these roles, the extension director would also make the final selection of new extension personnel. The district directors would make decisions in the area of professional advancement only where these decisions pertain to the county staff, while the extension director would be involved in professional advancement matters that concern specialists, program directors, and district directors, in addition to the county staff.

The extension director is the only position for which resolution of conflict is designated a primary role. The extension director is expected to resolve conflicts between extension positions and between departments but not among county staff. Rather, the district director and the county staff themselves are expected to settle conflicts within the county.

The district directors and extension directors also have some roles that would be more of a professional than administrative nature. Persons in both of these positions are expected to be involved in state level program planning and the district directors are also expected to make regional level program planning decisions. Research and personnel training are primary roles for the district director but the extension director and his staff are expected to be involved in research activities only to a limited extent and in personnel training not at all. No program methods or teaching responsibilities were assigned to persons in either of these positions.

As we would expect, department heads and the extension committee are assigned relatively few roles in extension compared to the other positions. Since department heads are mainly responsible for the administration of their own academic departments, extension activities would be a small part

of their job. Of the total of 58 roles included in the study, only ten were assigned to the academic department heads. The one primary role for this position is that of personnel selection and even this is limited to decisions that pertain to the screening and selection of program directors and specialists.

The limited number of roles assigned to the extension committee (a total of 13) reflects the part-time basis of their involvement in extension activities. We have designated two primary roles for this position: budgeting decisions at the county level and program planning at the county and regional levels. Although extension committee members are expected to be involved to a very limited extent in other role areas, this involvement is consistently limited to decisions or activities within the county.

Disagreement in Role Expectations

In this study, we have attempted to determine the extent of disagreement in informal role expectations among extension personnel. We found that there is more disagreement about the roles for some positions than others and also that the amount of disagreement varies from one role area to another. As specified previously, disagreement that is relatively polarized is defined as role conflict. Where responses are more dispersed between positive and negative expectations, or an "undecided" response, the roles are defined as discretionary. The frequencies of role conflict and discretionary roles for each position are presented in Table 15. We have used frequencies rather than percentages in this table since the base total of 58 roles is constant for all positions.

The findings of this study indicate that there is very little conflict in informal role expectations in extension. There are no conflicting expectations for the state staff and only one or two instances of role conflict for most of the other positions. The greatest degree of conflict occurs with respect to the roles of the district directors and program directors.

Discretionary roles are considerably more prevalent than is role conflict. The number of discretionary roles varies from ten for the extension committee to twenty for the department heads. There are at

TABLE 15: Frequencies of Role Conflict and Discretionary Roles
for each Extension Position

<u>POSITION</u>	<u>ROLE CONFLICT</u>	<u>DISCRETIONARY ROLES</u>
County Agent	2	17
Extension Home Economist	1	19
Specialist	1	14
Program Director	4	19
District Director	5	19
Extension Director	0	13
Department Head	1	20
Extension Committee	1	10

least two ways of interpreting the relatively frequent occurrence of discretionary roles. One inference that could be made is that these roles are not adequately defined, resulting in a lack of agreement on whether or not, for example, the district directors should decide how a program is to be presented. An alternative interpretation would be that whether or not persons in a given position are expected to make certain decisions would depend on specific and variable circumstances allowing flexibility to professionals. It is very likely the case that both of these conditions contribute to the lack of agreement in informal expectations which we have defined as discretionary roles.

In the context of the ten different role areas, the greatest amount of role conflict occurs in the areas of program planning and relationships with other organizations. (See Table 16) We found no role conflict in the areas of resolution of conflict or decisions regarding professional advancement.

The largest percentages of discretionary roles occur in the three areas concerned with extension personnel: professional advancement, personnel training and personnel selection. The area of program planning has the lowest percentage of these roles.

Role Strain

Part of this study was concerned with the amount of role strain experienced by the extension personnel in performing their jobs. The findings indicate that role ambiguity is not a serious problem, the respondents tend to feel that, at least most of the time, they know what their responsibilities are, how much authority they have, where to get information and to whom they are responsible. The most ambiguous aspect of their jobs is the question of evaluation criteria.

Role conflict, that is, a perception of contradictory role expectations, was found to be slightly more problematic than was the case for role ambiguity but does not seem to be a matter of great concern among extension personnel.

Role expectations in an organization can be communicated to the personnel in a number of ways, including formal job descriptions which tend to be changed infrequently, periodic directives from supervisors:

TABLE 16: Percentages of Role Conflict and Discretionary Roles for Each Role Area

<u>ROLE AREA</u>	<u>ROLE CONFLICT</u>	<u>DISCRETIONARY ROLES</u>
Budgeting Decisions	4 %	23 %
Program Planning	6 %	14 %
Program Methods	2 %	35 %
Teaching	2 %	20 %
Research	5 %	23 %
Relationship with other Organizations	6 %	27 %
Resolution of Conflict	0	25 %
Personnel Selection	2 %	39 %
Personnel Training	3 %	44 %
Professional Advancement	0	45 %

and informal conversations with colleagues. The effectiveness of such communications other than job descriptions is partly related to the structure of the organization. In some respects the organizational structure of extension may not be conducive to adequate communication of role expectations. For example, the dispersment of county staff throughout the state means that communication among themselves and with persons located on the university campus is probably not as frequent as it would be if all personnel worked in the same place. Specialists and department heads are not only officed in different buildings on campus but many of them are also highly involved with their own specialized academic work as well as extension activities thus limiting the amount of time they can spend interacting with other persons in extension.

One problem which could be anticipated in cases where disagreement over role responsibility occurs is whether persons in a particular position tend to assign themselves more or less responsibility than others assign to them. For example, if the position of the respondent is related to how he or she defines a certain role is there a tendency to seek power through greater responsibility, or to avoid responsibility through assigning it to someone else? Although not evident from the tables we present herein, there is no such tendency. In some cases in which there is position related differences in responses, the program directors or district directors may assign themselves tasks which others assign to someone else. In other cases, the occupants of these two positions think the role under question really should be performed by someone else although others may assign the role to one of these types of directors. Indeed, we may go further and say that in about as many cases, the differences in the way people define the role of, say, the district director is due to differences between the way, say, agents and the state staff see the role, while the district directors themselves are divided about the same way the remainder of the sample is. In other words, there is evidence that persons in extension neither attempt to extend their control nor abrogate their responsibility.

One of the most clear-cut patterns is that within any given decision making area, extension personnel legitimize the division of responsibility along geographic lines. Extension is organized formally along these lines by state, district, region, area, and single counties. The evidence herein indicates a clear understanding of this structure and an approval of it as appropriate.

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