

ROLE PERSPECTIVES OF JOINT APPOINTEES

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A continuing challenge for nursing education and nursing practice is to seek ways to bring the education of students and the clinical practice of nursing closer. The concept of joint academic/clinical appointments in nursing is one method of promoting collaboration and unity between education and practice. The past decade and a half have seen the growth of joint academic/clinical appointments in university nursing faculties, both in Canada and in the United States. The literature describing organizational models and personal experiences of joint appointees is positive, for the most part, although there are some acknowledged problem areas. Little research on the current trend toward joint appointments has been undertaken; there is a need to review the development of joint appointments and their effect on the individuals involved.

The purpose of this study was to provide a descriptive analysis of the role expectations of joint academic/clinical appointees in Canadian university nursing faculties. Role theory was used as the framework from which to review the role expectations of joint appointees who, by virtue of their obligation to report to two organizations, are in a multiple role situation. Relationships among the variables role negotiation skills, perceived congruency and job tension were assessed.

Definition of terms

A joint academic/clinical appointment arises when a school and a clinical agency enter an agreement to appoint persons to positions in both organizations. For the purposes of this study, joint appointments are named according to the agency of primary responsibility. A Faculty-Agency appointment designates a faculty member to a secondary appointment in a service agency. An Agency-Faculty appointment describes the role of a nurse whose primary responsibility is to a service agency, but who has a secondary appointment on the faculty of an educational institution.

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Literature Review

A joint academic/clinical appointment places an individual in a multiple role situation. The individual is responsible to two different organizations: this is reported to place conflicting or unrealistic expectations on the role incumbent (Eschbach, 1983; Kuhn, 1982). Role conflict has been found to be present when an individual fulfills a multiple role (Getzels & Guba, 1954; Rizzo, House & Lirtzman, 1970). Role ambiguity and role overload are additional potential problems for the individual in a multiple role (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek & Rosenthal, 1964; Lyons, 1971). An individual with highly developed role negotiation skills (role making and role restructuring) will be more successful in handling the demands of a multiple role (Hardy & Hardy, 1988).

McCarthy (1974) conducted a study to describe the roles and responsibilities of joint academic/clinical appointees in baccalaureate nursing programs in university medical centers. McCarthy concluded that an organizational model requiring dual allegiance created internal and external conflicts. This was a result of the individual having to choose between equally desirable alternatives. These inter-role conflicts led to tensions and confusions for the incumbents.

More recently, Anderson and Pierson (1983), conducted an exploratory study in which they compared the responses of faculty members who had a practice component to their roles with those who did not. Findings indicated that conflicting messages were received from schools with regard to the importance of practice: 37% of the respondents reported that their school's written philosophy included faculty practice as a desirable element, while 58% of these respondents' schools did not allot time for this practice. Both students and service agency personnel held a more positive view of faculty practice than did faculty who were not involved in practice.

A survey of Canadian university schools of nursing by Davis and Tomney (1982) reported that ten had joint appointments with service agencies. They cautioned that "each joint appointment must have goals clearly identified by the administration of both institutions" (p. 36). Descriptions of the experiences of Canadian university schools of nursing in joint appointments have, for the most part, been positive (Arpin, 1981; Kergin, 1980; MacPhail, 1987; Malowany, 1981; Royle & Crooks, 1985, 1986). Common features are that faculty have a formal role in both university settings and in health care agencies, and that the purposes of these appointments are to promote inter-organizational communication and cooperation, to enable faculty to gain credibility with students and staff, to improve student learning, to promote a high standard of care and to promote clinical nursing research.

Research Questions

Posed in a framework of concepts relating to the expectations of individuals in multiple roles, this study examined the following questions:

1. How well do joint appointees negotiate certain aspects of their role?
2. What are the joint appointees' perceptions of congruency of role expectations as held by educational institutions and by health care agencies?
3. What is the job tension level of joint appointees?
4. What are the relationships among role negotiation skills, perceived congruency and job tension?

Method

Sample

In the first phase of the study, a survey of the 26 Canadian nursing degree granting institutions found that ten reported the use of joint academic/clinical appointments. A letter was sent to the deans or directors of these ten schools of nursing asking them to identify those faculty members who held joint appointments. They were requested to include both their own faculty who were in joint appointments as well as "Associate Faculty" (joint appointees whose primary responsibility was in a service agency).

The sample consisted of 223 subjects: 76 held Faculty-Agency appointments and 147 held Agency-Faculty appointments. The study was limited to full-time employed nurses who held a joint appointment between the university school of nursing and a service agency. Non-nurse faculty, those employed less than full time and those whose joint appointment was with another faculty or educational institution, were not included. Participation in the study was voluntary and individuals were assured that their anonymity would be maintained. The findings cannot be generalized to other populations because of the sampling technique used, .

One hundred and seventy-seven (79.4%) respondents returned the questionnaire, of which 139 (62.3%) responses were used in the analysis, 39 Faculty-Agency and 100 Agency-Faculty appointees. Questionnaires returned by forty-one respondents were deleted from the study because the faculty member had left the joint appointment, resigned from the university or service agency, returned the questionnaire late or indicated that she or he was not in a joint appointment.

Instrument

The study instrument, a self-administered questionnaire, consisted of five sections:

(1) The Use of Role Negotiation Skills (six items) - designed by the investigator, refers to the reported use of role making (consciously influencing role expectations) and of role restructuring (modifying role expectations of an existing role): for example, "I am able to reach mutual agreement with my supervisor within the service agency on job related issues."

(2) Perception of Congruency (14 items) - designed by the investigator, refers to the subject's perception of congruency in role expectations in the two agencies: for example, "I think that both the university and the service agency understand what is expected of me in each agency."

(3) The Faculty Job Tension Index (18 items) - was patterned after the Kahn et al. (1964) Job Related Tension Index, which was modified by Maurin (1985) to reflect differences between an industrial setting and an academic setting. Subjects were asked to indicate how frequently they felt bothered by work-related happenings: for example, "Feeling that the promotion and tenure criteria are beyond your reach." Subjects were asked to rate themselves on each of the items in the above three sections on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (low) to 7 (high).

(4) Professional Information: information on length of time in the joint appointment, educational level, teaching experience, tenure status (if applicable), work load and salary source was requested.

(5) The final section of the study instrument consisted of open-ended questions soliciting opinions about joint appointments.

Validity

The Use of Role Negotiation Skills and Perception of Congruency Scales have content and construct validity in two respects. First, the instruments were constructed using the theoretical concepts of multiple roles theory; secondly, all items were assessed and evaluated by experts in higher education and in joint appointments. Validity of the Faculty Job Tension Index had been established by Maurin (1985) using the Index of Content Validity (CVI) as described by Waltz, Strickland and Lenz (1984). Items were examined by independent nurse reviewers, and were retained only when there was 100% agreement that items could suggest adverse working conditions in nursing education.

Reliability

The original instrument of Kahn and associates is a widely-used scale and is reported to be a highly stable indicator of job tension (MacKinnon, 1978). Maurin (1985) refined the instrument and reported a reliability of .86. The reliability ratings, measured with Cronbach's Alpha, for the three scales were: Use of Role Negotiation Skills Scale, .69; Perception of Congruency Scale, .70; and Faculty Job Tension Index, .88.

Data analysis

Descriptive statistics included means, frequencies and percentage distributions. T-tests were used to compare the mean scores of the Faculty-Agency joint appointees' responses with the Agency-Faculty joint appointees' responses. Pearson's correlations were used to test for the existence of relationships among the variables of role negotiation skills, perceived congruency of role expectations and job tension. A factor analysis (oblimin rotation) was performed on the Faculty Tension Index. Content of the open-ended responses was analyzed to reveal common themes.

Findings

Ten (25.6%) of the Faculty-Agency and three (3%) of the Agency-Faculty appointees were doctorally prepared, while 27 (69.2 %) of the Faculty-Agency and 77 (77 %) of the Agency-Faculty held a Master's degree as their highest degree. The length of time in the joint appointment positions was found to be brief, 56% of the Faculty-Agency and 63% of the Agency-Faculty appointees reported being in their joint appointment position three years or less.

Average hours per work week were reported as 46.1 hours for Faculty-Agency joint appointees and 45.8 hours for Agency-Faculty appointees. Thirty-six (92.3%) of the Faculty-Agency appointees were engaged in research activities and spent 6.58 hours per week in these activities; 63 (63%) of Agency-Faculty were engaged in research and reported spending an average of 5.94 hours per week in research.

Research Question 1: How well do joint appointees negotiate certain aspects of their role? Data indicate that both groups of joint appointees have highly developed role negotiation skills (Table 1). Responses to one of the 16 items, "Ability to reach mutual agreement with my supervisor within the university on job related issues," did differ significantly. Agency-Faculty appointees indicated more problems in this area - that they had more difficulty reaching agreement on university job related matters.

Research Question 2: What are the joint appointees' perceptions of congruency in role expectations held by educational institutions and by health care agencies? The perception of congruency in role expectations received from the two agencies was significantly higher for the Faculty-Agency than for Agency-Faculty joint appointees (Table 1). This suggests that either the expectations for Agency-Faculty are not as clearly delineated as they are for Faculty-Agency appointees or that the Agency-Faculty group have a higher need for clarity.

Table 1***Use of Role Negotiation Skills, Expressed Perception of Congruency in Role Expectations and Job Tension Levels By Agency of Primary Responsibility***

Scale	Mean Scores			
	Faculty-Agency Joint Appointees N = 39		Agency-Faculty Joint Appointees N = 100	
	x	SD	x	SD
Role Negotiation Skills (6 items)	5.89	.91	5.83	.73
Perceived Congruency (14 items)	4.62	.76	4.12*	.30
Job Tension Levels (18 items)	2.88	.66	2.89	.69

Note: Rating scale ranges from 1 = Very Seldom to 7 = Very Frequently

* $t = 3.35$

$p = <.001$

Individual perception of congruency items that differed significantly would indicate that both groups had problems with clarity of expectations held by the second institution. This difference was more pronounced for Agency-Faculty appointees, that is, the expectations in the university dimension of their positions (second institution) were not as clear as role expectations for Faculty-Agency appointees for whom the agency dimension of their jobs was secondary.

The perception of adequacy of support services (secretarial assistance, office space) in the second institution also differed significantly. The Agency-Faculty subjects expressed more problems in this area - for example, not receiving adequate support services in the educational institution.

Research Question 3: What is the job tension level of joint appointees? The combined means on the 18-item Faculty Tension Index were low: 2.88 for the Faculty-Agency group and 2.89 for the Agency-Faculty group (Table 1). These findings may indicate that, even though the joint appointees report high work loads and incongruence in role expectations, they are satisfied with their work. Another possible explanation for the low tension levels may be the short period of time that the joint appointees are in the joint role and that, when the negative effects of a multiple role begin to be felt, the individ-

ual leaves the joint role. Responses on three of the eighteen items were found to differ significantly. Agency-Faculty joint appointees expressed feelings of not fitting in well with the faculty group. Perceptions that the job interfered with individuals' personal lives and that time-consuming activities were least significant in performance evaluation were concerns to Faculty-Agency appointees.

Research Question 4: What are the relationships among role negotiation skills, perceived congruency and job tension? A significant positive relationship exists between use of role negotiation skills and perceived congruency in role expectations (Figure 1). This suggests that successful use of role negotiation skills contributes to a perception of congruency in expectations held by the two agencies.

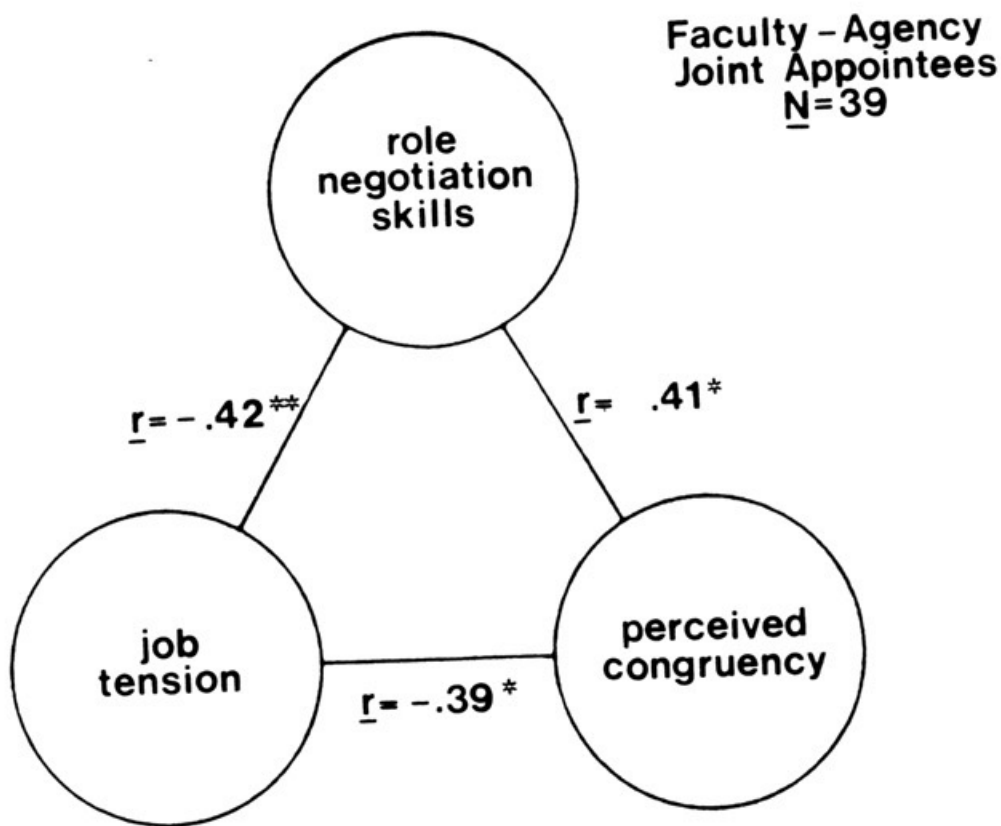
The presence of a negative relationship between perceived congruency in role expectation and job tension levels suggests that when the joint appointees' perceived congruency is threatened, the job tension level increases. The negative relationship between job related tension and role negotiation skills suggests that in situations where the joint appointee does not possess or is unable to use role negotiation skills, the job tension level increases.

Qualitative data from the open ended questions were examined and categorized. Data revealed that the joint appointments were, in many cases, not well planned nor clearly defined. Respondents often expressed the opinion that they did not feel like joint appointees, although they held the title of joint appointee; this was expressed more frequently by the Agency-Faculty group. "My joint appointment is in name only" and "Joint appointments can be developed and have great potential - at present they are in name only" were comments voiced by Agency-Faculty. Lack of clarity in role expectations was an expressed concern. One respondent stated that joint appointments "are not formally developed here. Very poorly defined as an official program."

Statements about being underutilized and not being involved in the affairs of the second institution came more frequently from the Agency-Faculty group. Comments included "I could do more for the university than I do" and "insufficient use of service agency people in faculty areas such as curriculum planning."

Factor analysis

A principal components factor analysis and Oblimin rotation of the 18 items on the Faculty Tension Index Scale yielded five factors, accounting for 66.6% of the variance. Only loadings with absolute values of .3 or greater were used. The five factors were role ambiguity, quantitative role overload,



* $p = < .05$
 ** $p = < .01$
 *** $p = < .001$

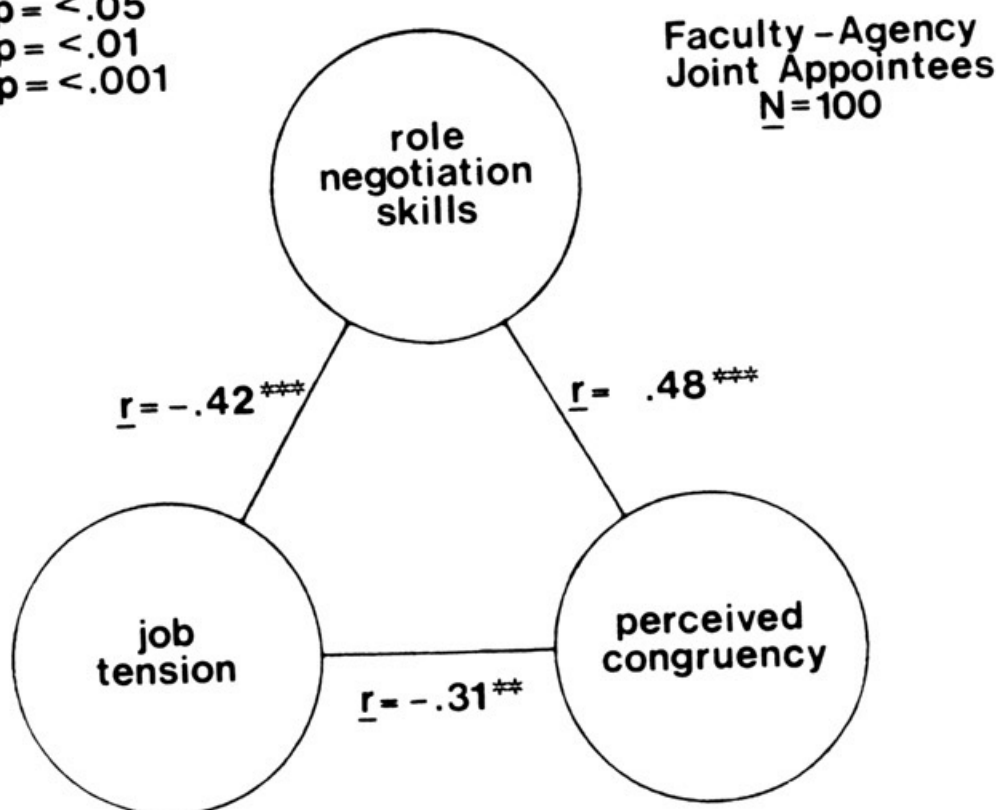


Figure 1
 Relationships between role negotiation skills, perceived congruency in
 role expectations and job tension for joint appointees,
 by agency of primary responsibility

powerlessness, role uncertainty and quantitative role overload. They provided additional evidence that these concepts are dimensions of job related tension.

Discussion

A limitation of the study was the use of the mailed questionnaire. Although the mailed questionnaire enables the investigator to contact respondents over a wide geographical area, the questionnaire format does not allow the investigator to seek clarification on particular points of the topic under study.

The results provide a description of a particular study population and contribute to an understanding of the present stage of development of joint appointments in Canadian nursing. The joint appointees are employed in both a university and in a hospital setting, are relatively new in the joint appointment and the majority (69.2% of the Faculty-Agency appointees and 77% of the Agency-Faculty) hold a Master's as their highest degree. The average hours worked per week, 46.1 for the Faculty-Agency group and 45.8 for the Agency-Faculty group, are greater than the 44.4 faculty hours reported by Anderson (1986) and are considerably greater than the 37.5 hours per week required of most government and industry employees.

The potential for role overload and role related tension exists in this profile. However, the job related tension levels are relatively low. It is possible that this may be attributed to the short tenure in these positions: joint appointees may find the multiple role too demanding and therefore leave after a relatively short period of time. The constructs of role ambiguity, role uncertainty and role overload were exhibited in the factor analysis. Theoretically, these factors would contribute to a high tension level. One can postulate that the joint appointee leaves the role when role related problems become evident.

The findings demonstrate that joint appointments, in many cases, are not well planned. Some joint appointees indicated that, even though they held the title of joint appointee, they did not consider themselves as such. The Agency-Faculty joint appointees frequently expressed a feeling that role responsibilities in the educational institution were not clearly defined. This is supported by the findings that Agency-Faculty appointees indicated more problems on the item "ability to reach mutual agreement with my supervisor within the university on job-related issues".

The hours devoted to research activities are similar for both groups: 6.58 hours per week for Faculty-Agency joint appointees and 5.94 for Agency-Faculty joint appointees. The high level of research activity reported by Agency-Faculty joint appointees may be related to 26 respondents (26%) reporting their clinical title as either clinical nurse specialist or nurse

researcher, with research a role expectation. The differences in academic qualifications between nurses in academia and those in service agencies has implications for the research expectations placed on Agency-Faculty appointees. There is a need to attract more doctorally-prepared nurses to service agencies to facilitate research activities.

Significant relationships exist among role negotiation skills, perceived congruency in role expectations and job-related tension for joint appointees. The direction of these relationships suggests that the individual with well-developed role negotiation skills will perceive a higher degree of congruity in the role expectations of the two agencies, and will experience a lower level of job tension.

The factors identified in the Faculty Tension Index Scale support the theoretical dimension of the effects that a multiple role has on an individual. The findings add additional evidence that role ambiguity, role uncertainty and role overload are dimensions of job-related tension.

The findings from this study have implications for joint appointees, potential joint appointees and nurse executives. Joint appointments must be well planned, with specific objectives clearly articulated and understood by both agencies. Job responsibilities and accountability must be clear, and availability of administrative support should be examined. Autonomy over time and scheduling is important, as is the availability of office space and secretarial support.

Nurse executives and joint appointees must co-operate in defining the role of the latter group, especially the role of the Agency-Faculty appointees in the educational institution. Individual joint appointees may need assistance in learning to set realistic expectations and being able to say "no" to unrealistic expectations. The many hours of work reported may be acceptable in the short term, but over a long period of time could be viewed as contributing to work-related tension and propensity to leave the joint appointment.

The findings of this study, when considered in relation to the current trend of joint appointments, suggests further areas of investigation:

1. What assistance can be given to potential joint appointees to enable them to function between two organizations successfully?
2. What administrative supports are required to function in a joint appointment (e.g. philosophy, amount of time, amount of resources and services)?
3. Are expected outcomes being achieved? For example, do joint-appointed faculty produce more research than non joint appointed faculty? Do joint appointed faculty have an impact on student learning?

4. An in depth examination of one model, assessing process, organizational structure and outcomes would add to our understanding of joint appointments as they presently exist.

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RÉSUMÉ

Perspectives sur le rôle des titulaires de postes mixtes

Cette étude porte sur les perceptions qu'ont de leur rôle les titulaires de postes mixtes qui les appellent à intervenir en milieu universitaire et clinique, c'est-à-dire dans les facultés de sciences infirmières des universités canadiennes et dans les agences de services correspondantes. Des données recueillies auprès de 39 titulaires de poste mixte enseignement - agence et de 100 titulaires de poste mixte agence - enseignement ont été analysées. Les résultats permettent d'affirmer que les rôles des postes mixtes sont mal définis et moins bien compris que ne le suggèrent les documents à ce chapitre. Les participants ne savent pas très bien quel rôle leur incombe exactement. Des rapports significatifs existent entre les différentes variables suivantes: compétences en matière de négociation du rôle, conformité des attentes à ce chapitre et tension au travail. Les conséquences de ces résultats sur les titulaires de postes mixtes, sur les personnes susceptibles d'occuper des postes mixtes et sur les infirmières en chef sont également abordées. L'auteur formule par ailleurs des recommandations sur l'orientation que doivent prendre les prochaines recherches à ce chapitre.