THE MIDDLE MANAGER ROLE IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

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ABSTRACT

Ericka J. Patillo: The middle manager role in academic libraries
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The academic library middle manager (ALMM) role is little understood and understudied. Using Organizational Role Theory, Middle Managers' Four Strategic Roles, and the Taxonomy of Managerial Performance Requirements as frameworks, this study was designed to identify and describe the expectations of the middle manager role in academic libraries; to discover the extent to which members of the middle managerâs role set agree about the expectations of the role; to learn the activities and behaviors ALMMs actually perform; to discover how employees learn the role; to learn to what extent AALMs experience role conflict, role ambiguity, and turnover intentions; and the extent to which ALMMs participate in strategic activities. This multiple case study utilized multiple perspective interviews, observations, questionnaires, and document analysis to gather data from 41 library employees across three academic libraries in order to create a bricolage of ALMM role set members' perceptions, expectations, activities, and behaviors. Based on the degree to which employees' expressed expectations overlapped (expectations consensus), participants expect ALMMs to communicate effectively, maintain technical proficiency, maintain good working relationships, and coordinate subordinates. But ALMMs also received a wide variety of expectations from their role set members and organizational documents, making them vulnerable to role conflict and role ambiguity. ALMMs also performed many activities that were not expressed as role set member expectations. Library employees learned the ALMM role through social interplay and learning rather through organizational documents or formal training. ALMMs in new positions and those subject to significant organizational change experience greater role ambiguity, while ALMMs who participate in strategic activities experience less role ambiguity. Findings support a further critique of ALMM preparation and training, including LIS education.

Dedicated to Dr. Deborah K. Barreau, my initial doctoral advisor, and Evangelist Evelyn B. Brown, my aunt, whose memories inspired me to persist.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

One factor that influences organizational effectiveness is the extent to which employees understand their roles and the expectations of the organization. A role is a socially defined pattern of behavior that is expected of an individual in a designated function in a particular position within a group, organization, or society. In the organizational setting, roles are designed to fulfill the goals and objectives of the organization. Materials such as job descriptions, organizational charts, and governance documents articulate the behaviors that are expected of individuals who hold positions; however, documents are not the only "role senders". People who interact with the individuals in these positions also have expectations about their behaviors, and occasionally these expectations clash. Incongruent expectations among a position's role set members can cause the incumbent to experience role conflict, role ambiguity, stress, and turnover intentions, which, in turn, may impact organizational effectiveness, measured in efficiency, productivity, profit margins, and goal accomplishment.

The middle management position is the role under investigation in this study. Middle managers are expected to perform many behaviors and activities to accomplish organizational goals. Some of the behaviors and activities are articulated through official documents, such as job descriptions, while others are acquired as job tenure increases and organizational changes occur over time. Middle managers are often expected to maintain expertise in certain subject or technical areas, and at the same time hone their managerial and leadership skills. Middle managers are often expected to be change agents and also respond to crises while maintaining effective operational units. All of the people who work with them – supervisors, peers, direct reports, suppliers and clients – each have their own perception about the behaviors and attitudes that make up the middle managers' roles, and all of these people communicate their expectations through formal and informal channels. These expectations may differ to the extent that they cause conflict and ambiguity for the middle manager; these conditions may lead to consequences such as stress and job dissatisfaction and ultimately

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to the middle manager leaving the organization. Turnover is costly for organizations in terms of expense and effectiveness.

Middle managers are vulnerable to role conflict and role ambiguity because of the nature of their positions. Middle managers hold boundary-spanning positions that put them in contact with a variety of employees, operations, strategies and clients. In addition to holding boundary-spanning positions, middle managers, who are already known to be involved with strategy implementation, are also increasingly involved in strategy formation. Middle managers' involvement in strategy formation is an emerging phenomenon. Middle manager involvement in strategic activities and boundary-spanning activities contributes to increased levels of role ambiguity and role conflict. In turn, role conflict and role ambiguity are related to higher intentions to leave oneâs job.

The present study examined these phenomena within the academic library context, providing a description and analysis of the experiences of several middle managers who work in university libraries. Through interviews with the members of the middle managers' role set (the focal middle managers, their direct supervisors, and their direct reports), analysis of organizational documents and middle managers' calendars and resumes, and observations of the middle managers in their natural environment, what emerged is a bricolage of the meanings of the middle manager role within the academic library context. The expectations consensus indicates that academic library middle managers are expected to communicate effectively, maintain technical proficiency in their functional areas, guide, direct and motivate employees in their units, maintain relationships, and coordinate the work of their units. Overall, the academic library middle managers who participated in this study reported low role conflict, role ambiguity, and turnover intentions, and on average, they participate in strategic activities only occasionally. However, analysis of the rich data gathered indicated employee status, the nature of the library unit, and time-in-position of the middle manager as factors that influence the middle manager's experience of role conflict, role ambiguity and turnover intentions.

1.1 Rationale

There are few empirical research contributions about middle managers in the academic library context. An intensive, naturalistic, multiple case study was the best approach for the purposes of this study because it allowed for a close examination of a small sample of academic library employees and relevant organizational documents in some detail, and it emphasized research in context.

Rather than concern itself with universal managerial qualities or characteristics, this study

focused on the meanings of the academic library middle management role. This study assumes that context is an important factor in understanding middle manager roles; that is, middle management in academic libraries is formed and understood differently than middle management in other enterprises, especially for-profit entities. Understanding how the middle management role is perceived and how the expectations are formed are important factors in organizational effectiveness and managerial training.

Role theory is an appropriate lens to use to interpret the organizational realities of academic library middle managers because it has been used to examine the role characteristics of other middle managers. Sociologists and social psychologists study human social behavior, including that within the context of organizations. Originating in the 1930s (Mead, 1934; Moreno, 1947; Linton, 1936), role theory has been utilized to study the behaviors, attitudes, and cognition of people in organizations. Organizational actors assume roles and act to produce outcomes that maintain and re-energize the work of the organization. The roles in an organization come about through planning and design, but also through the social interplay of people's perceptions and expectations. Role theory is useful as a lens to examine the ways in which the organizational actors create and influence the roles of middle managers.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Modern managerial trends have suggested that the flattening of hierarchies, indicated by the elimination of multiple organizational layers and the direct supervision of frontline employees by higher level administrators, increases efficiencies by "taking out the middle man" and distributing decision making authority throughout the organization, especially "on-the-ground" at the point of need (e.g., to have the authority to make an autonomous decision when serving a customer). Other potential benefits of eliminating middle management positions include more direct lines of communication between and among front-line staff, professionals and senior-level managers, leading to the democratization of organizational information, and the decrease in personnel expenditures due to the elimination of positions.

Due to the dearth of empirical research, very little is known about the academic library middle manager role; this lack of understanding may itself impact organizational effectiveness. Senior level managers who are charged with restructuring their organizations may eliminate middle management positions without a complete understanding of the middle managerâs activities and contributions;

other organizational actors may interact with and benefit from middle managers differently, and arbitrarily decreasing middle management positions might negatively impact the organization. The employees in the middle manager's organizational unit may have a different perception of the behaviors that constitute the middle manager's role than what is articulated in organizational documents or by the middle manager's direct supervisor.

Because middle managers' contributions to the goals and mission of the organization are not always easily discernible, top administrators may unnecessarily eliminate these positions during economic crises, major restructuring projects, and after the implementation of innovative technologies without careful consideration. For example, flattening the organizational hierarchy to create cost-cutting advantages and efficiencies may increase the remaining managers' spans of control to the extent that they become ineffective managers. Senior level administrators may not be aware of the ways in which their middle managers help lower-level employees make sense of organizational events; this is one role that may be understood by viewing middle management from the perspectives of other closely related positions in the organization. Middle-level managers, with their unique vantage point, hold much of the organization's knowledge and memory, which means they may better facilitate change processes than the executives or remaining staff. Flattening hierarchies and restructuring are activities that are stressful for the remaining middle managers, who now have more responsibilities.

What does middle management mean in today's academic libraries? Even in organizations with well-documented position descriptions or governance documents, the middle manager (MM) may have duties and perform activities that are not articulated in organizational documents. And, the middle manager has multiple relationships in the organization, with their superiors, their peers, their direct reports, external clients and other stakeholders. All of these organizational actors have expectations of the middle manager, and they may or may not be congruent. How MMs perceive these competing expectations may affect their abilities to do their work, and they may also create other consequences like stress.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The primary purpose of this study was to describe the middle manager role within the context of a medium-sized academic library. What is the role of the middle manager in today's academic library? What are the expectations of the middle managers in the academic library environment? Is there agreement among the middle manager's role set regarding the expectations of the middle

manager? The objectives of this study were to explore and describe the roles of the academic library middle manager through the lenses of the members of the middle manager's role set; to learn if there are discrepancies among the expectations sent to the middle manager; to learn if these expectations include strategic activities; and to discover any evidence that supports the antecedents and conditions of role conflict and role ambiguity that are found among middle managers in other contexts and settings.

Since there is little evidence-based knowledge about the role of middle managers in academic libraries, the study employed a multi-level, multiple case study research design to learn the expectations of academic library middle managers from an analysis of the organizational setting in which the middle manager's work occurs. The examination included observations of the work setting, analysis of organizational documents, interviews with members of the middle manager's role set (middle managers, senior level managers that supervise middle managers, and supervisors who report to middle managers), and the middle manager's responses to role conflict, ambiguity, and turnover intentions questionnaires. In other contexts, middle managers have been found to hold boundary-spanning positions, to participate in strategic activities, and to experience role conflict and ambiguity and its consequences; this research will help determine how findings in the management and sociology literature regarding middle managers might apply to the academic library setting.

Middle management in academic libraries is often discussed in the Library and Information Science (LIS) literature but seldom studied in a systematic way. Given this situation, it is important to examine the role of middle management in academic libraries more closely and through several lenses. This study increases understanding of the roles of middle management in university libraries.

1.4   Research design

This intensive, naturalistic study used a multiple case study approach to construct an understanding of the role expectations of academic library middle managers. Through observations, interviews, questionnaires, and document analysis, qualitative and quantitative data were gathered from the organizational setting, several members of the middle managers' role set, and organizational documents.

Sites for the study included three 4-year, degree-granting universities affiliated with one state system of higher education. A primary criterion for inclusion was that each library employ at least 50 staff members with a hierarchy that included middle managers. In this design, the middle manager

is the case, so the number of cases was dependent upon the number of middle managers per library and the level of participation of the middle managers. The number of cases was 11.

The data were initially analyzed based on codes derived from the middle manager strategic activity scale (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1996), the Taxonomy of Managerial Performance Requirements (Borman & Brush, 1993), and the abridged role conflict and ambiguity scales (Murphy & Gable, 1988). Data matrices enabled cross-case analyses and revealed patterns of expectations and activities across organizations and middle management positions.

1.5   Definitions of terms

Middle Manager: "any individual who is regularly involved in, or interfaces with, the organization's operations and who has some access to upper management" (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1996, 111).

Role: A socially defined pattern of behavior that is expected of an individual in a designated function in a particular position within a group, organization, or society (Bass, 2008).

Role Theory: A theoretical lens that theorizes the functions and behaviors of individuals within a complex sociological environment. It is premised upon individuals behaving according to social identities and situations (Biddle, 1986).

Role Set: The set or group of people that are in contact with the actor and have expectations for how the actor will function and behave (Robinson, 2012).

Role Expectations: The expectations held by persons in the actorâs role set concerning the function and behaviors of the actor (Robinson, 2012).

Role Perception: What an individual sees are the behaviors needed to enact a role (Bass, 2008).

Role Conflict: The concurrent presence of incompatible and/or conflicting role expectations (Robinson, 2012).

Role Ambiguity: A condition of uncertainty about what is expected and what role behavior will be accepted and rewarded (Bass, 2008).

1.6   Overview of the research design appropriateness

Multiple approaches have been employed to study the phenomenon of role conflict or role ambiguity among middle managers. Standardized questionnaires have been used to gather quantitative data

about role expectations (Jusoh et al., 2011), role conflict (Madden, 2013; Floyd & Wooldridge, 2000), and turnover intentions (Madden, 2013) from a large number of subjects; other research designs have used observations (Hales & Mustapha, 2000) and interviews (Robinson, 2012; Hales & Mustapha, 2000; Mantere, 2008) to collect and analyze qualitative data related to middle managers or mid-level positions and role factors.

In an attempt to understand a particular social situation and a role within a particular context, the range of research design possibilities was narrowed to the naturalistic paradigm. Few of the earlier studies gathered data from all of the role senders in a particular organizational setting [1]. Katz and Kahn (1966) suggested that such a comprehensive view would be most useful in understanding role behavior in an organizational setting. An intensive, naturalistic approach is more likely to deliver rich data enabling the identification of the competing role expectations and perceptions directed at one focal personâthe middle manager in academic librariesâand whether or not this person experiences role conflict, ambiguity, or turnover intentions. Also, in previous studies of middle manager activity, conflicting findings about their involvement in strategic activity appear to be related to the research design; this study attempts to address these methodological issues by gathering data from the middle managers as well as the members of their role set. The choice of methodology was based on a determination of the best fit for an exploration of the meanings of the middle manager role in an academic library setting from the points of view of several organizational actors and the organization itself.

1.7 Research questions

1. What are the role perceptions and expectations of the academic library middle manager? This question addresses the foundation for this study and is addressed using in-depth interviewing techniques, observations, and document analysis. What do the middle managers believe to be the roles and expectations for themselves, and what do the environment (the context) and the members of the middle managerâs role set tell us about these roles and expectations? Is there agreement among the members of the middle managerâs role set regarding middle manager

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[1]Gurr and Drysdale 2013 provide an exception in that their study was a multi-level one in which middle-level school leaders were the focus. They interviewed other members of the middle-level school leaders' role set: principals, senior leaders, and teachers were interviewed to gain their perceptions on middle-level leadership. They also conducted document analyses.

strategic activity? How do expectations vary among the members of the middle managersâ role set?

1a. What activities and behaviors do academic library middle managers engage in to fulfill their roles and job duties?

2. Where do the perceived roles and expectations originate? How do academic library employees learn what middle manager means? What words are used in organizational documents to describe what middle managers are expected to do?

3. To what extent do academic library middle managers experience role conflict, role ambiguity, and turnover intentions?

4. How are middle manager role conflict, role ambiguity, or turnover intentions related to the middle managers' participation in strategic activities?

1.8 Theoretical/conceptual frameworks

To situate this study in the existing research and demonstrate its usefulness, three major discourses were examined: organizational role theory (ORT), middle manager strategic activity, and academic library administration. An earlier pilot study used a grounded theory approach; it is introduced here to support the use of role theory and the naturalistic methodology.

1.8.1 Pilot study

The initial pilot study was designed in 2010 to begin exploring the meanings of middle management in academic libraries. Using a grounded theory approach, the goal was to get into the environment and see what themes or theories might emerge from observations, interviews, and document analysis. The primary questions, at that time, were how and with whom did middle managers communicate, how did employees at multiple levels of the organization understand middle management, and what did the official documentation say about middle management duties, roles and responsibilities. For the pilot, one academic library middle manager was chosen as the focal person. She was observed at work for five days, including her participation in group meetings; this middle manager, her senior manager, three of her peers, and four of her direct reports were interviewed; and several official documents, including job descriptions, strategic plans, mission statements, and the middle managerâs curriculum vitae and calendar were gathered and analyzed.

A number of key concepts emerged during the data collection and analysis process. A primary concept was role conflict in that the senior managerâs expectations of this middle management role were different than the expectations of the middle managerâs peers and direct reports. Specifically, the senior manager expected vision and leadership, while the middle managerâs peers and direct reports expected technical expertise in addition to vision, leadership, and traditional managerial functions such as training and mentoring. Role theorists assert that characteristics of the role sender influence how the role is sent and how those role perceptions are perceived. Role senders who have more power, authority or influence are more likely to have their expectations met. Role senders who have less power, authority or influence, or who send conflicting or incongruent role perceptions, may be discounted or ignored by the focal person (Katz & Kahn, 1966).

Another key concept that emerged in the findings of the pilot study was role ambiguity. Based on observation and participant responses, it came to light that a recent restructuring had taken place, and multiple people expressed a lack of clarity about the middle manager's new responsibilities.

The third key concept that emerged was a conflict between values espoused and values enacted. There was at least one lost opportunity to enact the value of collaboration, which was articulated in several library documents. Also, although the middle managerâs job description indicated specific collaboration partners, these did not include her peers, with whom the middle manager frequently collaborated on a number of cross-departmental projects.

Finally, the researcher observed many behaviors of the middle manager that may be classified as sensegiving activities. Sensegiving is a turbid theoretical construct, and what constitutes sensegiving activities is an unsettled area; however, the observations, though limited, made in this pilot study can be compared to those found in several studies on sensegiving and managers (Smith et al., 2010). The middle managerâs behaviors and interpretations during sensegiving activities may influence othersâ expectations of the middle manager role.

The limited results of this grounded theory pilot study suggested that the organizational actors in this academic library had different expectations of the focal middle manager and that the middle manager experienced a lack of clarity regarding some of their responsibilities. These findings led the researcher to the phenomena of role conflict and role ambiguity, which are key concepts of role theory. Furthermore, observation and analysis of the middle managerâs daily activities led to an examination of the management, sociology, and LIS literature related to middle management activity;

this exploration suggested that sensegiving and strategic and traditional management activities might be useful frameworks for describing the expectations of middle manager behavior in academic libraries.

1.8.2 Role theory

Role theory is a theoretical lens that attempts to explain and predict the functions and behaviors of individuals within a complex sociological environment. It is premised upon individuals behaving according to social identities, situations, and expectations (Biddle, 1986). It is most commonly used to describe that which an actor is expected to do, i.e., the actions and behaviors associated with a specific social position (Robinson, 2012). In this study, the complex sociological environment is the academic library, and the specific social position is that of middle manager. Relevant role theory concepts include the organizational perspective, role expectations, role conflict, role ambiguity, and turnover intentions.

Organizational perspective

The organizational role theory perspective focuses on the pre-planned, task-oriented and hierarchical social systems found in formal organizations (Biddle, 1986). Organizational roles and role behaviors are often position-based and defined by documents such as job descriptions and organizational charts (Katz & Kahn, 1966), but they are also influenced by the social interplay of peopleâs perceptions and expectations. The organizational setting impacts the perceptions and expectations of organizational roles (Katz & Kahn, 1966; Lynch, 1976). Organizational role theory is applicable as a framework to examine the ways in which the organizational actors create and influence the roles of middle managers.

Expectations

Organizational effectiveness largely depends on the extent to which employees understand their roles and the expectations of the organization, and their ability to perform these roles and the concomitant duties. Understanding oneâs own role and adequately performing oneâs role behaviors is complicated by the influence of othersâ expectations and the ways in which these expectations are communicated. These phenomena can be explored by an examination of the expectations of the members of the middle managerâs role set, defined as the set or group of people that are in contact with the actor and have expectations for how the organizational actor will function and behave (Robinson, 2012).

Role conflict, role ambiguity, and turnover intentions

The concepts of role conflict and role ambiguity express possible outcomes of incongruent expectations among the members of a role set. Role conflict and role ambiguity have been found to be negatively associated with six different aspects of job satisfaction and positively associated with tension, anxiety, propensity to leave the organization, and individual productivity (Jackson & Schuler, 1985; Madden, 2013; Tubre & Collins, 2000). Middle managers who experience incongruent expectations from the members of their role set are more likely to have lower job satisfaction, lower job performance, and higher turnover intentions.

1.8.3 Middle manager activity and behaviors

There have been many attempts to describe and codify managerial activity. The activities and expectations that middle managers face are varied and contextual (Katz & Kahn, 1966; Lynch, 1976). Relevant research deals with three categories of managerial activity: traditional (or classic functions), strategy, and sensegiving. For this study, The Taxonomy of Managerial Performance Requirements categories were used to describe middle managers' traditional activities. Complete Taxonomy definitions are provided in Table C.1.

The Taxonomy of Managerial Performance Requirements Dimension Names (Borman & Brush, 1993):

1. Planning and organizing
2. Guiding, directing, and motivating subordinates and providing feedback
3. Training, coaching, and developing subordinates
4. Communicating effectively and keeping others informed
5. Representing the organization to customers and the public
6. Technical proficiency
7. Administration and paperwork
8. Maintaining good working relationships
9. Coordinating subordinates and others resources to get the job done
10. Decision making/problem solving
11. Staffing
12. Persisting to reach goals
13. Handling crises and stress
14. Organizational commitment
15. Monitoring and controlling resources
16. Delegating

17. Selling/influencing
18. Collecting and interpreting data

Strategic activities of the middle managers were explored using Floyd and Wooldridge's Four Strategic Roles (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1996):

1. Championing strategic alternatives
2. Synthesizing information
3. Facilitating adaptability
4. Implementing deliberate strategy

The strategic activities questionnaire is available in Chapter B.

Sensegiving activities vary and no theoretical construct for sensegiving was used in this study. Sensegiving activities include meetings, de-briefings after meetings, modeling behavior, etc.

Academic library middle managers may be vulnerable to role conflict, role ambiguity, and turnover because of the nature of their work, which exposes them to a variety of role senders and requires a broad range of behaviors and activities. Managers in boundary-spanning positions are more likely to experience role conflict (Friedman, 1992; Kahn et al., 1964; Miles & Perreault, 1976; Whetten, 1978), and the number of roles a manager is expected to play is related to role conflict (Nandram & Klandermans, 1993; Peterson et al., 1995). Middle managers experience higher role conflict because they hold boundary-spanning positions and positions between two competing hierarchical levels (Floyd & Lane, 2000).

CHAPTER 2

Review of the Literature

To situate this study in the existing research and demonstrate its usefulness, three major areas of literature were examined. First, role theory scholarship is reviewed including approaches used by theorists to understand middle management. Second, types of middle manager activity are described. Finally, the LIS literature is examined to establish the context of the academic library.

2.1   An overview of role theory

Organizational effectiveness largely depends on the extent to which employees understand their roles and the expectations of the organization. Organizational role theory presents a useful framework for studying the positions, roles, expectations and behaviors at play in organizations. Organizational actors assume roles and act to produce outcomes that maintain and re-energize the work of the organization. The roles in an organization come about through planning and design, but also through the social interplay of people's perceptions and expectations. Role expectations, behaviors and activities, role consensus, role ambiguity and role conflict have impacts in the organizational setting, particularly on job satisfaction, performance and turnover intentions. If expectations are ambiguous or in conflict, the consequences may negatively impact the organization and its goals and objectives. Organizational role theory (ORT) is a particular theoretical perspective that can be utilized to examine the ways in which organizational documents and organizational actors create and influence the roles of middle managers.

Role theory is a theoretical lens that attempts to explain and predict the functions and behaviors of individuals within a complex sociological environment. The underlying assumption is that individuals behave according to social identities, situations, and expectations (Biddle, 1986). While the term "role" has been used in various ways by sociologists, it is most commonly used to describe that which an actor is expected to do, i.e., the actions and behaviors associated with a specific social position (Robinson, 2012). The position may be found in any realm in society: wife, mother; friend, colleague; pastor, parishioner; student, teacher; neighbor, and so on. One person may have several

roles, within and across various societal realms, and these roles may have congruent or competing expectations. For example, a woman may be a mother and an employee, and the sets of behaviors expected for each position are different; at some points they might overlap, and in others they might conflict. A single mother who is a low-wage earner with two wage jobs is compelled to work more than 40 hours a week to provide housing and food for her child; when this mother needs time off work to tend to her child's health, to meet with teachers, and to perform other maternal activities, she cannot afford to take the time off work as this would cause a decrease in her income. This mother may experience stress as she tries to deal with these incongruent expectations. Role theory provides one way to explore the relationships among these roles and behaviors, and provides a framework for possible outcomes and consequences of role perceptions and expectations.

Several terms contribute to the ensuing literature review and discussion[1]:

Role: A socially defined pattern of behavior that is expected of an individual in a designated function in a particular position within a group, organization, or society (Bass, 2008).

Role Sender: A person who is in contact with the actor and has expectations for how the actor will function and behave.

Role Set: The set or group of people that are in contact with the actor and have expectations for how the actor will function and behave (Robinson, 2012).

Role Expectations: The expectations held by persons in the actor's role set concerning the function and behaviors of the actor (Robinson, 2012).

Role-repertoire: This term refers to the unit larger than role-set, and would include all the role-sets of a particular person (Heiss, 1990).

Role Perception: What an individual sees are the behaviors needed to enact a role (Bass, 2008).

Role Ambiguity: A condition of uncertainty about what is expected and what role behavior will be accepted and rewarded (Bass, 2008).

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[1]Note that the definitions below come from a variety of sources. Contextual information from Biddle helps to explain that the terms originated from different theoretical perspectives.

Role Strain: The experience of an actor when the role obligations associated with the role are greater than can be accomplished without stress and strain (Robinson, 2012).

Stress: The experience of the actor as a consequence of the culmination of physiological and psychological demands placed upon the actor in the role (Robinson, 2012).

Role Overload: A situation in which role requirements exceed the limits of time, resources, and capabilities (Bass, 2008).

Coping: The process or processes employed by an actor to limit or negate the negative aspects of stress (Robinson, 2012).

The five major perspectives of role theory are Functional, Symbolic Interactionist, Structural, Organizational, and Cognitive Role Theory (Biddle, 1986), and they represent the broad range of the conceptualizations of role theory from early thought to contemporary theorizing. Because the vocabulary varies across these theoretical perspectives, Biddle (1986) provides a summary of key concepts that have stimulated research. These key concepts are consensus, conformity, role conflict, and role taking.

Consensus, the first key concept, denotes agreement among expectations held by various persons, particularly those in the role set. Social roles are generated when persons in a social system share norms for the conduct of a social position. Here, the underlying assumption is that consensus is probable. However, consensus may prove to be unlikely in certain contexts and situations, so normal consensus is not a given but a concept that may influence role expectations and contribute to role conflict. *Conformity*, the second key concept, refers to compliance to some pattern of or expectation for behavior. Scholars have expended considerable time and effort on the relationship between expectations and behaviors. The evidence suggests that persons do conform to expectations that are held by others, are attributed to others, or are held personally by the actor. *Role Conflict*, the third key concept, describes the âconcurrent appearance of two or more incompatible expectations for the behavior of a person" (Biddle, 1986, 82). Scholars have identified several types of role conflict (described below), all of which have been found to contribute to stress. Finally, *Role Taking*, the fourth key concept, refers to the accuracy and sophistication with which a person perceives the expectations of the role sender(s); this ability may be influenced by the person's personality,

intellect and mental capacity. According to the symbolic interactionist perspective, role taking is the process through which we originally see ourselves. "It is through the perspectives of others that we become aware of self and act toward self" (Charron, 1995, 107). The self continues to be defined and redefined through interaction with others. Role taking is necessary for understanding the other and being understood by the other, and contributes to all interaction, to the individual, and to group life. Taking the role of the other is basic to human cooperation, is the basis for human symbolic communication, and allows us to see the present both from our own past and from future perspectives. This concept explains one process through which MMs receive and interpret the expectations sent to them from the members of their role set and through which role set members send expectations.

Symbolic Interactionist and Organizational Role Theory perspectives provide diverse explanations of role taking and role consensus that, if taken together, present a more satisfying description. Symbolic Interactionism holds that we are who we are because of the expectations of and interactions with our social groups, and the ability to exhibit appropriate role behavior determines ongoing participation in group life (Charron, 1995). However, the assumption of shared norms as an underlying principle of consensus is problematic (Biddle, 1986). In ORT, the expectations of people who hold positions in organizations are primarily determined by organizational objectives and articulated in official documentation (Katz & Kahn, 1966; Biddle, 1986); however, each role sender has their own expectations of organizational positions and sends them to the job occupant. A role sender's role expectations reflect the sender's conception of the focal person's position and his or her abilities (Katz & Kahn, 1966). In addition to the expectations of others, consideration of the actor's own perception of their role adds to the complexity of understanding role consensus, role taking, and role behaviors. Consensus, role conflict and role taking are three of the key concepts that undergird the current study.

Applying some of these terms and concepts to the foregoing example, the single mother's situation might be described this way: There are certain behaviors, based upon societal norms, that are expected of this woman in her role as mother and in her role as employee – in this case, an employee of two organizations, which multiplies the role relationships. There is a set of people in contact with this woman in her role as mother and additional sets of people in contact with her in her roles as employee, giving her three role sets; these role sets form her role repertoire. Role perception refers to the woman's understanding of the behaviors expected for each role; role expectations refer to the

behaviors the people in her role sets believe make up her roles. This woman may experience role conflict because some of the role expectations of mother are incompatible with the role expectations of employee (especially of two organizations, which may cause additional role conflict); this is known as *interrole conflict* (Katz & Kahn, 1966). This woman may eventually experience role strain and stress in trying to keep up with the (competing) demands of her multiple roles.

Role conflict can also come from the absence of role consensus among the woman's role set. If the people (or institutions) who form the role set for her role as mother disagree about the behaviors required for this role, she may experience *intersender conflict*, which means that expectations from one role sender are in conflict with the expectations from other role senders. Another type of role conflict is *intrasender conflict*, in which the expectations from one role sender are themselves incompatible (Grover, 1993; Katz & Kahn, 1966).

The ORT perspective focuses on the pre-planned, task-oriented and hierarchical social systems found in formal organizations (Biddle, 1986). The roles in an organization come about primarily through planning and design, and role behaviors are specified in written documents and coded presentations (Katz & Kahn, 1966). According to ORT, "role" is defined as a set of recurring behaviors or activities that are performed within a specific position or job within an organization (Biddle, 1986; Katz & Kahn, 1966; Kahn et al., 1964). Katz and Kahn (1966), in their seminal work *The social psychology of organizations*, suggest a framework for "the taking of organizational roles" by modeling the environment, the process, the relationships, the mediators, and the consequences of role expectations and role sending within the context of a type of open system: the formal organization. Katz and Kahn assert that their theory links the "organizational and individual levels by making explicit the social-psychological processes by which organizational roles are defined and role behavior is evoked in the ongoing organization" (Katz & Kahn, 1966, 172). They argue that because organizations are contrived social forms, they persist during situations of personnel turnover as long as the psychological cement holds.

In the open system described by Katz and Kahn, each position in the organization is associated with a set of activities or behaviors that constitute the role to be performed by any person who occupies the position. The organization is a structure of interrelated positions, and the relationships among these positions are based on workflow, technology, lines of authority, and administration of organizational goals. A position may have many direct relationships with other positions, which

make up the role set of the focal position. Unlike the relationships that occur among roles outside the organizational setting, in formal organizations, role behaviors are specified in written documents and coded presentations, and "the roles people play are more a function of the social setting than of their own personality characteristics" (Katz & Kahn, 1966, 174). Indeed, according to some role theorists, middle management is a structured and formally defined role that includes concrete behavioral expectations (Ashforth, 2001; Biddle, 1986), and this role can be learned and performed by a wide range of individuals regardless of their personal preferences (Guillen & Saris, 2013). In the open systems perspective, the approach is to identify the relevant subsystem and "locate the recurring events which fit together in converting some input into an output. This can be done by ascertaining the role expectations of a given set of related offices, since such expectations are one of the main elements in maintaining the role system and inducing the required role behavior" (Katz & Kahn, 1966, 174). While the roles are assumed to be based on normative expectations, norms may vary among individuals, and pressures of informal groups may also influence expectations (Biddle, 1986).

Role Senders		Focal person	
Expectations	Sent role	Received role	Role behavior
Perception of focal person's behavior; evaluation	Information; attempts at influence	Perception of role; perception of role sending	Compliance; resistance; "side effects"
I	II	III	IV
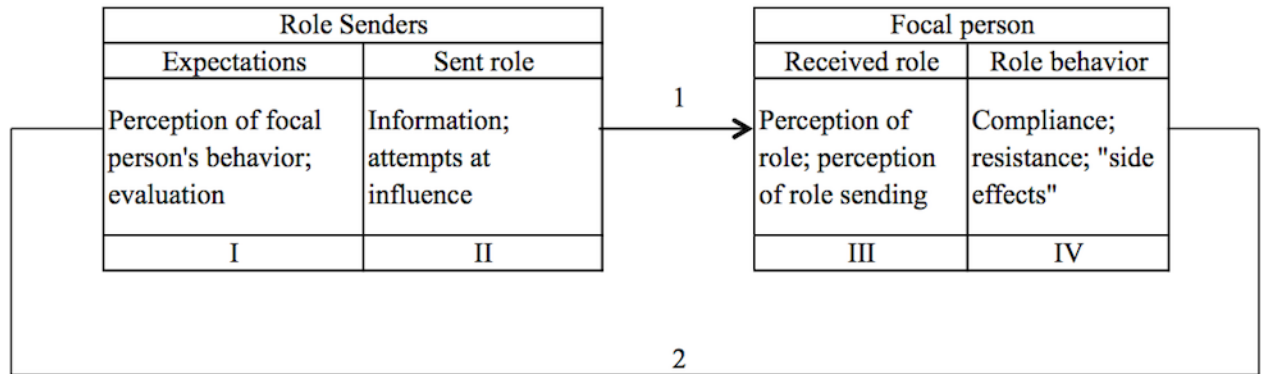
Figure 2.1: A model of the role episode (Katz & Kahn, 1966, 182)

Katz and Kahn (1966) focus on four role theory concepts within the context of the organizational setting [See Figure 2.1, A model of the role episode] that constitute their *role episode*: *role expectations, sent role, received role,* and *role behavior.* In their explanation of a *role episode*, they describe the *focal person* (also referred to as the role occupant) as one who receives role expectations from *role senders*, who are people in the focal person's *role set*. In this model, *role expectations* refer to the

18

behavioral standards applied to the holder of a particular office or position; the *sent role* refers to information sent by members of the role set to the focal person in order to influence role behavior; *received role* is the focal person's perceptions of their role based on information sent from their role set and those they sent to themselves; and *role behavior* is the focal person's response, indicated by actions. Note the response can be compliance or resistance, or there may be additional side effects, such as stress or role strain. In ORT terms, role-compliance is achieved when expectations are clear and well defined and the incumbent performs as expected. When both the organization and the incumbent are in agreement, resulting in the high performance of the incumbent, then role-consensus is said to be in operation (Day, 2011; Katz & Kahn, 1966).

The role-episode review process is necessarily dynamic, and is underpinned by four assumptions:

- that an employee will "take" or accept a role that is conferred upon them by members of the organization (the role-taking assumption); and

- there will be consensus regarding the expectations of all roles (the role-consensus assumption); and

- that employees will comply to the behavior that is expected (the role-compliance assumption); and

- the belief that role-conflict will arise if expectations are not consensual (the role-conflict assumption) (Biddle, 1986).

The role-sending and role-receiving functions continue until the role occupant has complied with the role expectations of the members of his or her role set (Wickham & Parker, 2007). The role episode indicates evolving role expectations (Day, 2011).

The validity of ORT and these underpinning assumptions have been contested regarding their applicability in contemporary organizations. "The role-taking, role-consensus, and role-conflict assumptions are far too simplistic to serve as a basis for multiple-role management in the contemporary organizational context" (Wickham & Parker, 2007, 452). These challenges are due to the potential impact of non-work roles on work role-taking, role consensus, and role conflict, and the inadequacy of employers' response to these factors. Recall the single mom with her work and non-work roles. In contemporary organizations, employees typically must multitask and take on multiple roles, making the taking on of multiple roles normative rather than necessarily problematic, as suggested by Katz and Kahn. Also, the role-consensus assumption requires a stable organizational environment in which work roles are predefined before consensus can be achieved (Wickham & Parker, 2007).

In the organizational setting, there are many positions, and each could be focal depending on the focus of the study. Each organizational actor has a role set, has role expectations, sends roles, receives roles and has role behavior. Furthermore, as Katz and Kahn note, there are limitations to the model. First of all, role expectations is chosen as a convenient starting point; secondly, in an organization there is usually more than one role sender and more than one set of expectations and these may be in conflict; finally, there is the abstraction of the role episode from the context of organizational events. The authors include intrasender, intersender, and interrole conflict as factors that inhibit role consensus throughout the organization. These were described above. Katz and Kahn also make reference to *person-role* conflict, which refers to conflict that occurs when "role requirements violate the needs, values or capacities of the focal person" (Katz & Kahn, 1966, 185). This kind of conflict may also lead to behaviors by the focal person that are unacceptable to members of his role set. A particular kind of role conflict that is prevalent in the workplace is that of *role overload*, which is a type of intersender conflict whereby the role senders' expectations are legitimate, but due to the limitations of time and/or quality requirements, the focal person cannot accomplish all of the expected tasks. He must decide which pressures are more important, leading to a kind of person-role conflict.

In addition to the role episode, Katz and Kahn theorized on the causal factors involved in the taking of organizational roles, represented in Figure 2.2. Here, the authors demonstrate how organizational, personality and interpersonal factors influence the expectations, perceptions and behaviors of the role senders and the focal person. Organizational factors, which may be stable or unstable, affect how the role senders determine what the role expectations are. Organizational factors include structure, policies, rewards and penalties. For example, role-taking expectations are set out in organizational documents (Day, 2011) such as organizational charts, job descriptions and promotion policies. Organizational factors may be inadequate as causal factors in the contemporary organizational context because of the additional influences of nonwork-related role requirements (Wickham & Parker, 2007). The personality traits of the focal person and the interpersonal relations between the focal person and the role sender affect how the role is sent, how the role is received, and how the role behavior of the focal person is interpreted by the role senders.

Recent research has explored the ways in which role ambiguity and role conflict affect organizational life and work. Role ambiguity, which is the opposite of role clarity (Rizzo et al., 1970), occurs

4   Attributes of the person B   8

Role Senders		Focal person	
Role expectations	Sent role	Received role	Role behavior

Organizational factors A

3   5   1

7

6   2   9

Interpersonal factors C
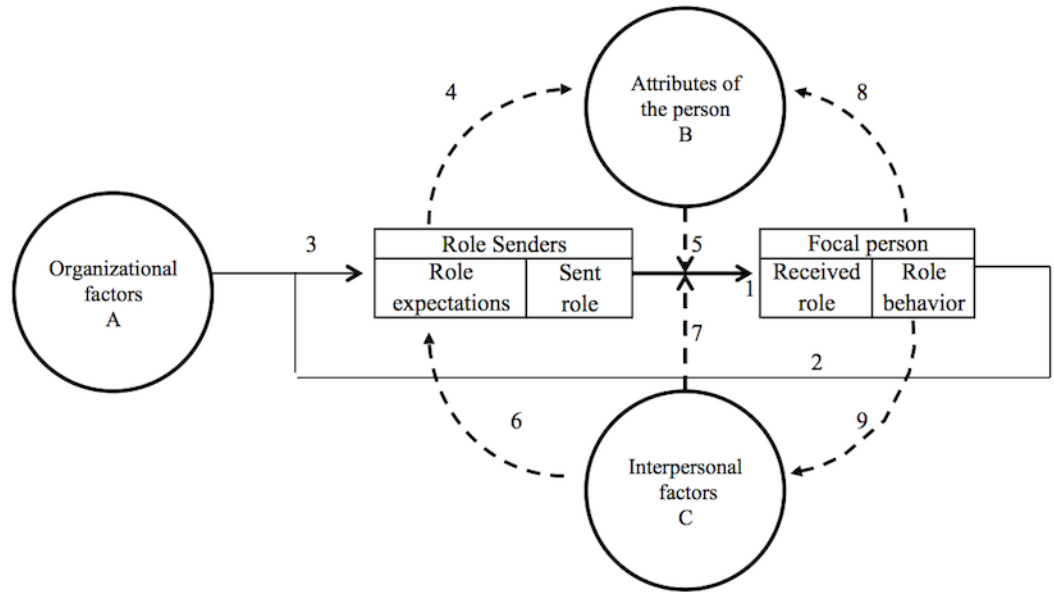
Figure 2.2: A theoretical model of factors involved in the taking of organizational roles (Katz & Kahn, 1966, 187)

when organizational actors are unsure about the behaviors and activities involved in their jobs, are unsure about the criteria upon which they will be evaluated, and may be uncertain about how their jobs fit into the overall organizational strategy (He et al., 2011). Role ambiguity is negatively associated with organizational commitment and job satisfaction (Ngo et al., 2005; Slattery et al., 2008). Role theory has been used to examine how factors such as time constraints and inconsistencies in role requirements, organization, rewards, and modes of accountability in multiple role situations cause role ambiguity, role conflict and role strain (Richards & Templin, 2012). Role identity and role conflict have each been used as a lens to study the ways in which women organize their roles and perceive themselves within their roles (Graham, 2000).

Research question 1 asks what are the role perceptions and expectations of the academic library middle manager role and is there consensus among the middle manager's role set. If there is a significant difference between the perceived and preferred middle manager behaviors among the middle managers, their supervisors and their direct reports, then one might conclude that there is some role-discrepancy in operation whereby the expectations are not agreed upon and role-consensus has not yet been achieved (Biddle, 1986; Kahn et al., 1964; Katz & Kahn, 1966; Day, 2011). This

study indicates the extent to which there is role consensus among the participants.

Role theory has been used to study the impacts of role conflict and ambiguity in a number of professions: the ministry (Robinson, 2012), coaching (Richards & Templin, 2012), teaching (Gurr & Drysdale, 2013) and middle management (Madden, 2013). Robinson (2012) found that pastors in Brethren in Christ churches experience role ambiguity and role strain due to the competing expectations among congregants as well as conflicting expectations from church bishops. Many pastors deal with their stress by leaving the ministry. Richards and Templin (2012) explored the interrole conflict among coaches who also have physical education teaching responsibilities and recommend that more empirical research be done in this area. Gurr and Drysdale (2013) found that middle-level secondary school leaders, such as subject department heads, experience role ambiguity, unsure about the extent to which they should focus on their teaching versus their leadership roles. Madden (2013) tested the relationships between psychological capital and role conflict among middle managers. Psychological capital is made up of four specific positively-oriented strengths and capacities: hope, optimism, resiliency, and self-efficacy. Madden found that role conflict can have damaging consequences on the middle managers personally, as well as negatively affecting organizational performance.

One line of research that has emerged as having connections to role theory is coping. When actors experience role strain or stress due to role conflict, they seek ways to alleviate that stress. Actors may respond by withdrawing from or severing ties with the role senders (Robinson, 2012; Kahn et al., 1964), actions which might be deleterious if one remains in the workplace. Actors may also cope with stress with deception. Grover (1993) employed role theory to examine causes for lying and deception in the workplace. He theorized that role conflict that causes distress in organizational actors precedes lying, which is a mechanism for reducing role strain and stress. Actors may also respond by leaving the job or the organization, or by experiencing turnover intentions.

Role expectations also represent standards by which role senders evaluate the focal person's performance (Katz & Kahn, 1966); these evaluative standards may vary among the role set. They are communicated to the focal person in a variety of ways: direct instructions as well as the expression of displeasure in particular behaviors. Role senders attempt to influence the focal person so as to bring about conformity to the sender's expectations; the role sender's level of authority may affect their ability to grant rewards or punishment to bring about compliance to their expectations. If the

sent role expectations are considered by the focal person as illegitimate or coercive, the reaction may be strong resistance that results in behaviors that are opposite of the expectations. "How closely the received role corresponds to the sent role is an empirical question for each focal person and set of role senders, and will depend upon properties of the senders, the focal person, the substantive content of the sent expectations, the clarity of the communication, and the like" (Katz & Kahn, 1966, 177). In addition, the focal person him- or herself is a self-sender, with beliefs and attitudes about what the position's responsibilities and objectives are. The person may have an 'occupational self-identity' through which they occupy a position that has organizational expectations they are willing to comply with, even if those acts violate their own personal values.

Organizational role theory becomes more complex when the realities of organizational situations are considered. The simplest arrangement is that one activity defines role and office (to use Katz and Kahn's term for organizational space); this structure suggests role/position specialization (or silos) that requires coordination at a higher level. In a library with a physical collection, the job of shelver might consist of one activity: returning books to their appropriate places in the stacks. The activity defines the role; the office is the organizational space associated with that role and activity. The situation may become more complex in several ways:

- Multiple activities may be defined into a single role.
- Multiple roles may be defined into a single office.
- Multiple offices may be held by a single person (Katz & Kahn, 1966, 180).

The circulation assistant may be responsible for multiple activities: shelving, circulation transactions, directional and finding questions, and other non-programmed situations (e.g., a patron complaint, an unforeseen event). Each of these activities require training and explicit procedures; as the complexity, number of tasks, and number of people in this role increase, the need for coordination rises.

This complexity is evident if we look at the higher levels of management in large organizations. For example, a front-line supervisor has two roles, to oversee activities as well as to participate in them.[2] Middle and top managers may have multiple roles across production, procurement, marketing,

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[2]Katz and Kahn refer to membership in the two subsystems of management and the immediate task force.

etc. An example of multiple offices held by a single person is the dean of a graduate school who is also University Vice-President for Research, or an academic library middle manager who is also a library faculty member.

Katz and Kahn make a number of predictions based on the complexities of organizational roles:

1. The more activities in a role, the more varied and satisfying it will be, and the more likely the coordination among the activities.

2. The more interrole coordination required, the more coordination activities are assigned to upper management.

3. The more coordination required in a given office, the more generalization and standardization is sought to create programmatic solutions.

4. The greater the programming of inter-job coordination, the greater the use of authority and sanctions to gain role performance compliance (Katz & Kahn, 1966, 181-82).

According to Katz and Kahn, "a complete study of an organization would require that each office in it be successively treated as focal, its role set identified, the role expectations and sent role measured, and the received role and role behavior similarly described" (Katz & Kahn, 1966, 183).

In addition to these workplace complexities, the focal person's non-work roles may be contributing factors that are not considered in traditional ORT (Wickham & Parker, 2007).

It is useful to consider how individuals form their perceptions and expectations of organizational roles. Many of the behaviors for a particular position are described in official documents such as job descriptions, annual reports and organizational charts. But, as Katz and Kahn (1966), Biddle (1986), and Charron (1995) suggest, perceptions and expectations exceed the contents of the official documentation, and each person may have their own perceptions and expectations instead of there being shared norms upon which they all agree. Social learning theory may be the best way to explain how actors learn their roles (Heiss, 1990). Developed by Albert Bandura, social learning theory claims, in part, that humans learn acceptable social behaviors by observing the actions of others, or the reactions of others to their actions. So, "an individual's roles are largely learned from other people, and, therefore, actor and other are likely to agree about role definitions only if they have been exposed to similar influences" (Heiss, 1990, 96-97). According to Heiss, versions of roles that have been observed most frequently will be more acceptable than those that have been observed less frequently. Robinson suggested in his study of pastors that the models of ministry taught in seminary or articulated in pastoral theology may differ from the models encountered by individuals

in specific congregations; newly trained pastors perceive their role based upon training whereas their new congregants may have a different set of expectations based on their experiences. Middle managers in academic libraries face similar circumstances: are their own mental models for middle managers the same as the models of the persons in their role set? Have they learned the roles differently? How do librarians learn middle management? How does continuing to work with their previous middle manager influence their behaviors?

According to Floyd and Lane (2000), organizational positions have primary and secondary sets of roles. The primary roles are dictated by the position's association with the operational goals of the organization. The primary role expectations may be articulated in organizational documents and are also related to the organizational structure. The secondary roles are behaviors that support the organization's objectives but are less closely linked to the daily operational functions and are not overtly expected. Managers may have a variety of secondary roles, including those related to strategic processes and to helping their subordinates make sense of organizational events. The roles associated with a particular management position will vary based upon its level in the organization's hierarchy.

2.2 Theory and research related to middle management

2.2.1 The nature of managerial work

Researchers have taken a number of approaches in attempting to explain the role behaviors of middle managers. In order to examine management activities and suggest best practices, the scope and activities of managerial work need to be understood. The classic functions of management are organizing, leading, planning, controlling and coordinating (Fayol, 1949). But what activities and behaviors do managers perform to accomplish these functions? These are not mutually exclusive categories. There are at least three levels of management in medium-to-large organizations: top, or senior management, including the CEO, director or dean, and other executives; middle, or junior management, often including department heads; and frontline management or supervisors, who direct the work of the employees (i.e., operatives). Do all managerial levels participate equally in planning, organizing, leading, controlling and coordinating? It is not clear to what extent managers are responsible for these functions, nor is this an exhaustive list. MMs' participation in traditional management functions varies depending upon the nature of the organization (Lynch, 1976), personal

goals of the manager (Luthans et al., 1988a), and job-related expectations (Katz & Kahn, 1966). Various attempts have been made to describe the activities expected at the middle management level: Researchers have observed the behaviors and activities managers perform during their workday (Mintzberg, 1980; Luthans et al., 1988a; Smith et al., 2010) and codified the activities (Borman & Brush, 1993); analyzed the characteristics of managers' work (Hales, 2001; Mosley, 2009; Borman & Brush, 1993); developed theoretical models to explain and predict managers' behaviors (Plate, 1969; Presthus, 1962); and analyzed employers' expectations of managers (Bailey, 1981).

Two seminal works from the management literature provide potentially exhaustive lists of managerial activities. Based on the observations of 457 managers from organizations of all sizes in both private and public sectors over a period of four years, Luthans et al. (1988a) found that managers engage in four categories of activities (Table 2.1): traditional management (planning, decision making, and controlling); routine communication (exchanging routine information and handling paper work); human resource management (motivating, disciplining, handling conflict, staffing, and training); and networking (socializing or politicking, and interacting with outsiders). In the second study, Borman and Brush (1993) conducted a factor analysis of 187 managerial performance dimensions gathered from 26 empirical studies of managers across several organizational contexts and used the results to create the Taxonomy of Managerial Performance Requirements, a list of 18 areas of competence designed to illuminate a universal terminology for capturing ways to not only evaluate managerial performance but to collate research on managerial work. Guillen and Saris (2013) used the taxonomy as Borman & Brush intended: a benchmark set of categories and a comprehensive list of manager performance requirements to help compare different managerial jobs. It was used extensively in the current study; the full Taxonomy is included in the Appendix in Table C.1.

Table 2.1: Categories of Managerial Activities. Based on Luthans et al. (1988a)

Activity	*Descriptive Categories Derived from Free Observation*
Routine Communication	Exchanging information, Handling paperwork
Traditional Management	Planning, Decisionmaking, Controlling
Networking	Interacting with outsiders, Socializing/Politicking
Human Resource Management	Motivating/Reinforcing, Disciplining/Punishing, Managing conflict, Staffing, Training/Developing

2.2.2   The nature of middle management

> *"Middle management is not a well-defined concept: a chain of middle-line managers with formal authority, which connects the operating core to the strategic apex (Mintzberg, 1975) or a chain which runs from just below the top to the first-line supervisors. The middle managers in this chain differ in status, knowledge, career possibilities, responsibilities, etc. The only thing they have in common is that they all are "in between", not an easy place in any organization" (Van Gils, 1997, 43).*

Middle managers' contributions to organizations, their role expectations, and the activities they perform to achieve their own and their organization's goals remain misunderstood and unclear. In times of instability, economic downturns and technological innovations, large, complex organizations tend to look to contract the middle management ranks (Hassard et al., 2009). Instead, organizations need to be clear about the contributions of their middle managers before eliminating their positions in attempts to flatten hierarchies and close budget gaps. Studies that have explored middle manager role behaviors and expectations are reviewed in the following paragraphs.

Who are the middle managers? How are they distinguished from executive or frontline managers? Descriptions of middle managers' defining characteristics vary throughout the literature. Identifying middle managers may be more complex in professional service organizations like libraries, which have a cadre of professionals who provide specialized services and who also occupy positions in a hierarchical bureaucracy in which numerous tasks are departmentalized. According to some scholars, the defining characteristic is the intermediary place held in the organizational chart as supervisory personnel that appear between top management and frontline supervisors; in other words, middle managers supervise supervisors and they are supervised by others (Bailey, 1981; Gamaluddin, 1973; Sullivan, 1992; Dutton & Ashford, 1993; Beck & Plowman, 2009; Carlevale, 2010). According to the definition of some researchers, there would be very few MMs in libraries: Managers two or three levels below CEO and one level above line employees and professionals (Huy, 2001; Smith et al., 2010; Dutton & Ashford, 1993; Wooldridge & Floyd, 1990; Beck & Plowman, 2009); these MMs also include frontline supervisors. Some MMs report directly to managing directors and are responsible for overseeing a functional or operational department (Hales & Mustapha, 2000). MMs supervise a certain number of direct reports (Plate, 1969); or they supervise a certain class of employee (e.g., professionals, or those who also supervise others (Plate, 1969; Bailey, 1981)). MMs have also been described based on their metaphorical place in the organization's universe, as the interpreter

or go-between who translates the organization's goals for and to the workers and who reports departmental successes and challenges to the top management (Van Gils, 1997; Osterman, 2008). Middle managers make decisions about how to implement the organization's strategic objectives (Beck & Plowman, 2009; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1996; Williams, 2001). Many managers in today's organizations may not have subordinates but may oversee primary cross-departmental activities (Mantere, 2008; Osterman, 2008); this type of MM may be found in both upper and operational middle management (Mantere, 2008). According to Van-Gils, MMs embody the roles codified by Mintzberg (1973): interpersonal, decisional and informational roles; however, these role behaviors vary depending upon the nature of the organization and the external environment (Lynch, 1976), or the nature of the MMs' duties and careers (Osterman, 2008). Clearly, "middle management" is unclear.

A recent attempt to define middle management gives a broad scope of several activities:

> "Middle managers are individuals who make decisions about how to implement the organization's strategic objectives . . . Middle managers interpret information and knowledge from top managers to make it meaningful to those below them in the hierarchy who are responsible for technical activities. At the same time they interpret information and knowledge from functional managers about technical and day-to-day realities of the organization . . . They then select those pieces of information that need top management attention. Thus, middle managers are responsible for interactions with those above them, with those they supervise, and with their peers." (Beck & Plowman, 2009)

In addition to Beck and Plowman's stipulation that middle managers implement strategic objectives, other research supports the notion that middle managers are also involved in strategy formation. The operational definition used in the current study is vague enough to include myriad activities and captures the "in-betweenness" of middle management positions: "any individual who is regularly involved in, or interfaces with, the organization's operations and who has some access to upper management" (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1996, 111).

In 1990, Dopson and Stewart opined: "There is, therefore, no comprehensive body of theoretical or empirical knowledge on the role, function and responsibilities of the middle manager" (1990, 9). The current literature is still not comprehensive, but the empirical knowledge has grown in the ensuing years since Dopson and Stewart wrote of their concern. Several researchers have made empirical contributions regarding the possible role expectations of the middle manager in terms of strategy (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1996, 1997, 2000; Wooldridge & Floyd, 1990; Wooldridge et al., 2008;

Williams, 2001); behaviors (Luthans & Larsen, 1986; Luthans et al., 1988b, 1985, 1988a); change management (Osterman, 2008; Kanter, 1986); adaption to restructuring (Hassard et al., 2009); boundary-spanning, internally as well as externally (Osterman, 2008); and sensemaking/sensegiving (Smith et al., 2010; Beck & Plowman, 2009). Perhaps because this territory is so murky, some researchers do not specify the characteristics of their middle managers beyond distinguishing them as not top managers and not frontline supervisors. Their focus is solely on the roles assumed by and expected of these managers. In these studies, MMs' strategic, sensegiving, and/or coordinating roles are the primary considerations (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1996, 2000; Mantere, 2008; Osterman, 2008).

Coordination, or working together to carry out the organization's objectives and tasks, is a key role that middle managers have had throughout the 20th century, and this role continues. Middle managers in the early 20th century coordinated the tasks of the departments in their organizations (Niles, 1941), and arguably, for today's middle managers, leading and coordinating the work of teams is an important consideration (Osterman, 2008). In fact, it may be one of the few universal roles among middle managers, especially when "middle managers" with no direct reports are included in the analysis – for example, project managers whose work crosses multiple organizational boundaries have coordination as one of their chief concerns.

Previous studies have used interviews (Luthans et al., 1988a; Smith et al., 2010; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992), questionnaires (Floyd & Wooldridge, 2000), observation (Luthans & Lockwood, 1984; Smith et al., 2010) and document analysis (Smith et al., 2010) to gather data about the role behaviors of middle managers. Luthans et al. (1988a) observed a broad range of 457 managers across several organizations and established four categories of behavior (see Appendix C for a comprehensive list): traditional management, human resources management, networking, and routine communication. These categories and data are useful for discussion of managerial behaviors. The "real managers" studies included a wide variety of organizations so as to make broad statements about management exclusive of organization type.

Smith et al. (2010) found that successful middle managers have similar values and participated in "everyday sensegiving" activities in order to increase awareness of those values among their employees. Based on observations of and interviews with middle managers across several award-winning plants in several industries, the common values identified were people, openness, community and being positive. The authors also suggest a common set of sentiment outcomes and substantive outcomes; that is,

there are tangible and intangible outcomes, and everyday sensegiving presents many opportunities for the manager to explicitly and symbolically influence performance and morale. The authors link the plant managers' values and sensegiving activities to clear expectations, enhanced motivation and commitment (sentiment outcomes) and to company performance and successful change efforts (substantive outcomes). These techniques also helped to connect espoused values to enacted values. Their findings indicate that the symbolic aspects of middle managers' activities may be more important than the instrumental ones. Sensegiving will be discussed in further detail below.

Taken together, these two studies suggest methods for exploring the contributions of middle management in a comprehensive way. Luthans et al. (1988a) used interviews, questionnaires and observation of hundreds of mid-level managers, their subordinates and colleagues from numerous organizations in order to describe the behaviors and activities of these managers. Through interviews with and observation of the plant managers, Smith et al. (2010) tried to make some connections between the managers' behaviors and the organizations' goals, values and performance. This research influenced the methods chosen for the current study.

2.2.3 Strategy and sensegiving

In addition to the more traditional or classic monitor-and-control managerial functions, middle managers in contemporary organizations may also make atypical or implicit/tacit contributions: participating in strategy formation and performing sensegiving activities. This section discusses the changing nature of middle management involvement in the strategy formation process and the interpretation of organizational events.

Table 2.2: The Changing Orientation of Middle Management Work (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1996, 7)

Traditional Orientation of Tasks	*Contemporary Orientation of Tasks*
Developing coordination within functional boundaries	Achieving relationships across organizational boundaries (Boundary-spanning)
Controlling growth	Finding innovation (Championing initiatives)
Executing plans	Encouraging an evolving mindset (Synthesizing information)
Applying new technologies to production	Transferring technology within the organization (Facilitating learning)

Table 2.2, The Changing Orientation of Middle Management Work, presents a comparison of traditional versus contemporary managerial tasks. Compared to the traditional functions of

management, Floyd and Wooldridge (1996) present a compelling take on contemporary middle management work. The contemporary orientation seems much more centered around organizational relationships, the MM's place in the social and technical networks, and the ways in which MMs influence and interpret meaning across the organization. The contemporary dimensions correspond to Floyd and Wooldridge's four strategic middle manager roles, described and discussed in the strategy section below.

MMs are uniquely qualified and situated to interpret organizational information to and from senior management, frontline operations, their MM colleagues and their departments, and clients and the external environment. MMs' work goes beyond concrete tasks of traditional management (although some MMs are still responsible for many of these functions) and deep into the interpretive realm. MMs make decisions that escape the attention of senior level management (Osterman, 2008) and select pieces of information that require senior management's attention (Beck & Plowman, 2009); MMs manage internal and external teams (Osterman, 2008); MMs are ambassadors to teams they do not directly oversee (Osterman, 2008); MMs interpret information and transmit knowledge to and from senior managers and functional managers, making strategy meaningful to those responsible for technical activities, and informing senior managers about the day-to-day realities of the organization (Dutton & Ashford, 1993). While "middle managers are responsible for interactions with those above them, with those they supervise, and with their peers" (Beck and Plowman, 2009, p. 912), which are all internal to the organization, MMs also interact with and interpret organizational information for those outside of the organization. Middle managers are involved with external stakeholders, particularly clientele (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1996; Dutton et al., 1997; Osterman, 2008), and they (and their organizations) are involved in meaning-making for their constituencies (Foldy et al., 2008; Rouleau, 2005). Being on the front line of change, middle managers are uniquely qualified to carry out change management due to their vital communicative role and their ability to effectively and efficiently organize and implement complex change efforts (Williams, 2001; Van Gils, 1997). They have to explain to people from the outside, in their own words and in various everyday situations, why the company has decided to change its strategy and what its new strategy is (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1996; Rouleau, 2005). Finally, "competitors are another outside contact residing almost exclusively in the domain of middle managers" (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1996, 20). MMs' experiences, situations and positions make them ideally positioned to participate in interpretive roles in the organization,

specifically strategy formation and implementation and sensegiving.

Strategy   The strategic role of the middle manager, if such a role exists, is a complex and controversial one. The traditional middle management position emerged in stable yet growing organizations, and the MM's focus in those organizations was on the efficient and effective maintenance of operations. The evolution of the middle management role, primarily due to IT diffusion and restructuring, has included a more active involvement with senior level management and the potential for increased involvement in the strategy formation and implementation process. Scholars have drawn differing conclusions about MMs' role in strategy.

Prior to and through the 1960s, senior management made the decisions and set the agendas, while middle managers interpreted and carried them out (Kotter, 1990; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1996; Osterman, 2008). In this context, middle managers may have made numerous decisions, but with little autonomy or involvement in setting the direction of the organization. Some scholars argue that it is still the case today that middle managers have the responsibility of implementing strategic change but have little involvement in its formation and little influence on top managers' agenda setting (Kotter, 1990; Osterman, 2008; Hassard et al., 2009); others theorize that in contemporary organizations, where middle managers interact with direct reports, peers, senior managers and external clients and stakeholders, middle managers are uniquely suited to contribute to both strategy implementation and formation (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1996; Beck & Plowman, 2009; Dutton et al., 1997). These contradictory findings are interesting and point to what may be significant differences based upon research design; that is, recent studies that used interviews with middle managers to gather data found little involvement with strategy formation (Osterman, 2008; Hassard et al., 2009), but studies that included document analysis, observation and interviews with those who interact with the MMs (peers, supervisors) concluded that middle managers do influence strategy and could have greater involvement (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1996).

Several scholars argue that senior management is solely responsible for creating the organization's strategic direction (Kotter, 1990; Williams, 2001) and that middle management is not involved in, nor influences, strategy formation (Osterman, 2008; Hassard et al., 2009; Mosley, 2004; Chang & Bright, 2012). In particular, Hassard et al. (2009) reported finding no evidence of MMs influencing senior management decision making or involvement in strategy formation. Instead, the "kind of

decentralisation we found involved devolvement of authority alongside cuts to employment numbers, which tended to mean a centralisation of core strategic goals and concepts and the re-establishment of top management prerogative. Senior management's core message in the 2000s is communicated down the hierarchy clearly and repetitively, similarly to how it was done in the time C. Wright Mills was writing" (Hassard et al., 2009, 23). This is a rather damning reference, considering that Mills was writing about MMs as cogs in the organizations of the 1950s. Floyd and Wooldridge (1996) suggest that middle managers of the post-war era were not involved in strategy formation because for most companies in that era, strategy was stable and the middle managers kept the internal operations on track: "they were chiefly concerned with planning for growth, monitoring costs, identifying variances, and resolving problems that operating managers could not handle. In brief, middle managers during this period oversaw the execution of a calculated, formal strategy that was articulated explicitly in detailed plans" (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1996, 5). Floyd and Wooldridge and others (Sullivan, 1992) argue that this singular internal focus is an artifact of the past, although the realities of the contemporary workplace might reveal that "middle managers live inside organizations and have little voice regarding the strategies of those organizations" (Osterman, 2008, 6). Floyd and Wooldridge might respond that this way of thinking is a legacy from the past and "continues as a source of confusion about middle management in today's business context" (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1996, 5).

There is evidence that middle managers are involved in strategy formation and influence senior management decision making. Observational studies of the strategic planning process conclude that middle managers (and other stakeholders) influence strategy formation (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1996, 2000; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991), and suggest that this involvement produces better organizational outcomes (i.e., profits). " . . . strategy formation can be viewed as *the organizational learning processes associated with the accumulation and deployment of organizational capabilities*" [emphasis from the original] (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1996, 35); that is, knowing what the organization can do informs the development of future strategic directions and responses to environmental shifts. Floyd and Wooldridge view organizational-level capabilities as crucial in that they "represent the firm's ability to exploit individual technologies and skills by coordinating and deploying them in an overall strategy" (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1996, 27). Because MMs interact with operations, senior management, customers and suppliers, they are aware of the organization's capabilities and they add

value by "modifying the implementation of deliberate strategy" (Currie, 2000, 17) and by "facilitating adaptability" (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1996). That MMs hold such critical positions and such valuable access to information is one reason why their elimination through flattening hierarchies should be carefully considered before being implemented. Once these linchpins in the organization's social and technical networks disappear, it is difficult to recover the organization-level competencies and the boundary-spanning capabilities that have been lost (Currie, 2000; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1996).

Despite this disagreement about MMs' participation in strategy formation, there appears to be consensus that contemporary middle managers are the "strategy practitioners" (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007) who take the strategic directions and goals of organizations, interpret them, and turn them into tactical and operational objectives to be carried out by the technical and professional operatives (Williams, 2001; Osterman, 2008; Hassard et al., 2009; Rouleau, 2005; Van Gils, 1997). This process includes the MMs gaining their own understanding of the strategic direction; the design, coordination and management of single and inter-departmental projects to achieve the new goals; and effective communication among all of the stakeholders, including senior management, other MMs, subordinates and customers. In these unstable environments (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1996), the nimble MM's interpretation of the strategic direction and events is critical (Beck & Plowman, 2009; Rouleau, 2005; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). In the past, the MM was seen as the go-between carrying out senior management's orders; now, given flattened hierarchies and greater autonomy, the MM's own interpretation of goals and events is seen as a factor in the strategy implementation process.

Strategy is emergent as well as deliberate (Currie, 2000). Senior level executives may identify the correct strategic direction, but they are ineffective and inefficient in making that strategy happen (Williams, 2001; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1996), because "top management's plans are often out of sync with organizational realities" (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1996, 17). MMs can mitigate this gap because of their knowledge of the organization's capabilities, awareness of customer demands, access to competitors and suppliers, and access to senior level administrators who form strategy. If permitted by senior management, MMs might have much to add to strategy during the formulation process as well as the implementation; and, feedback from the MMs during the implementation phase might alter the strategy.

For those senior managers who require evidence that MMs' involvement in strategy is warranted, one study found that involving MMs in strategy formulation improved performance and the bottom

line (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1996). In one piece of this significant work (which now has several derivatives), Floyd and Wooldridge identified five steps that were typically found in strategic decision making: (1) proposing objectives, (2) generating options, (3) evaluating options, (4) developing details and (5) taking necessary actions. They asked a selected set of middle managers from twenty firms to assess their level of participation in each step, while separately they measured the MMs' organization's financial performance. Floyd and Wooldridge found that enhanced firm performance was associated with middle management involvement in (1) proposing objectives, (2) generating options, and (3) evaluating options, and that improved firm performance was not associated with middle management involvement in (4) developing details or (5) taking necessary actions (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1996).

Based upon the discovery that middle management involvement in three strategic decision making steps enhanced organization performance, Floyd and Wooldridge identified and developed four strategic middle management roles. Table 2.3 presents an overview of the roles and some identifiable characteristics. Floyd and Wooldridge developed a psychometric scale to measure middle managers' involvement in strategic activities based on this research. The scale was administered to the middle manager participants in the current study in order to ascertain their perception of their involvement in these strategic activities and how this involvement may or may not correlate to their experience of role conflict, role ambiguity, and turnover intentions.

Floyd and Wooldridge found that senior managers often discouraged MMs' strategic roles and considered them secondary to command and control functions. The fact that MMs can control or influence executives' perceptions through information filtering and championing behavior can be seen as a negative, and some senior-level managers as well as middle managers feel that championing should be used sparingly and only by those middle managers that have earned the right to spend this kind of currency with top managers (Mosley, 2004).

From their unique vantage point, MMs accumulate vital knowledge from and about operations, suppliers, customers, technologies and competitors. They may use this knowledge to help accomplish the organization's strategic directions, or if they feel threatened, they may use this knowledge and interactions to undermine any change initiatives. In fact, as MMs champion, synthesize and facilitate strategy, they may go beyond or even ignore the plans indicated by top management. Their motives in doing so may be to resist change or to better enable change.

Table 2.3: Middle Managers' Four Strategic Roles

Strategic role	Key characteristics
1. Championing strategic alternatives	Hallmarks of strategic champions: • intimate involvement with operations (implementation experiences); • deep understanding of strategic logic (synthesizing experiences); • prudent risk taking (facilitating experiences); • astute political sensitivity (experiences in all four roles)
2. Synthesizing information	Hallmarks of effective synthesizing: • proactive learning; • deliberate communicating
3. Facilitating adaptability	Five associated behaviors: • encouraging informal discussion and information sharing; • relaxing regulations to get new projects started; • buying time for experimental programs; • locating and providing resources for trial projects; • providing a safe haven for experimental programs
4. Implementing deliberate strategy	Two paradoxes: • in managerial operations, strong leadership and sincere followership; • in process objectives, constructive conflict and consensus and unity of purpose

Floyd and Wooldridge have further described the influence of the roles and the nature of middle managers' contributions (See Figure 2.3). Upward influence affects senior management's view of organizational circumstances and/or the alternative strategies being considered. Downward influence impacts the alignment of organizational arrangements with the strategic context. Strategy is a change process that requires divergent thinking, while it also requires coordination of dissimilar activities and movement toward a coherent direction. The nature of the contribution of the Championing and Facilitating roles is divergent, and the Synthesizing and Implementing roles are integrative. The Championing and Synthesizing roles exert upward influence, and the Facilitating and Implementing roles exert downward influence.

Figure 2.3: Characteristics of middle managers' four strategic roles (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1996)

MMs' role in strategy cannot be ignored. This line of research has become increasingly prominent, certainly since Floyd and Wooldridge's work on strategic roles of middle management (and Gioia and Chittipeddi's (1991) seminal article on the role of sensemaking and sensegiving during strategic change processes). MMs carry out and create operational plans so that the strategic goals can be achieved, and they also devote an enormous amount of time and effort to connecting the actions of the workers to the values of the organization. Charged with implementing the organization's strategy, they are the âstrategy practitioners" (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007). In flatter and smaller organizations, this role is particularly prominent, as MMs' direct access to and collaboration with the frontline employees, senior management and external clients and competitors provides them with information from multiple perspectives. MMs have lenses with which they can see the bigger picture

as well as the finer (operational) details. They can coordinate and connect the dots in order to influence strategy formation and affect the acceptance of strategy at lower levels of the organization. These abilities and activities are particularly meaningful in a professional service organization, where MMs collaborate with experts and clients to achieve the organization's goals.

Sensegiving

> *"Sensegiving is concerned with the process of attempting to influence the sensemaking and meaning construction of others towards a preferred organizational reality"* (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991, 442).

Sensegiving is an emerging concept that has gained traction in recent years among management scholars, especially those who study strategic processes in organizations. When the focus is on the manager, sensegiving is often cited as the process through which the manager helps others make sense of the organization. Managers perform activities that help their superiors, peers, direct reports and clients interpret changes or equivocality in the environment. An aspiring sensegiver might find it useful to understand the sensemaking process. These ideas are explored below through an analysis of the relevant literature.

Sensegiving is inherently bound to sensemaking, and the concepts are considered two sides of the same coin: "one implies the other and cannot exist without it" (Rouleau, 2005, 1415). Sensemaking is a process âthat includes the use of prior knowledge to assign meaning to new information" (Schwandt, 2005, 182). Much of the language and many of the concepts articulated in the sensegiving research refer back to sensemaking, which is a process that is:

- Grounded in identity construction
- Retrospective
- Enactive of sensible environments
- Social
- Ongoing
- Focused on and by extracted cues
- Driven by plausibility rather than accuracy (Weick, 1995)

Sensemaking has been explained by describing the amount and type of actors' sensegiving activities (Maitlis, 2005). Examples of sensegiving activities include: calling a meeting, explaining a situation, issuing a warning, expressing an opinion, writing a report (Maitlis, 2005), information-gathering,

and symbolic and substantive activities that top management perform (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). "Sensegiving-for-others" influences their "sensemaking-for-self" (Foldy et al., 2008).

Sensegiving processes may take place in several levels of organizations; organizational actors influence each other, and sensegiving is used by both top managers and other internal and external stakeholders, such as customers, financial analysts, and employees (Rouleau, 2005; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). Sensegiving can occur through corporate storytelling and the framing of the actual and future situation (Soderberg, 2003).

Using a grounded theory approach and ethnographic methods, Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) developed the sensegiving concept as part of a sequential and reciprocal cycle to explain how leaders and stakeholders participated in sensegiving and sensemaking during a university-level strategic planning process. Based on their observations, they concluded that in stage 1, the new university president (CEO) participated in sensemaking activities to form a vision for the university; in stage 2, the CEO performed sensegiving activities in order to communicate this vision to the university's stakeholders; stage 3 was a sensemaking effort by the stakeholders to understand the vision; and stage 4 was a sensegiving effort by the stakeholders wherein they responded back to the CEO about their interpretation of the proposed vision. The authors suggest that understanding this process is important for top level managers who initiate and manage change in organizations.

Sensegiving happens during crises or unplanned change; it also occurs during day-to-day operations, and it includes symbolic behavior. Everyday sensegiving activities that middle managers do include daily walks (around the organizations), meals with employees, attending to a drinking fountain failure and vending machines on the third shift, eye contact and greeting workers by name (Smith et al., 2010). These actions help demonstrate the MMs' espoused values. Symbolic behavior is important as well, such as the wearing of safety goggles by a plant manager to emphasize that safety is a priority, and picking up trash while walking through the organization to create an example for the workers to follow. Symbols are significant in that they form a cognitive frame to guide how the actors interpret and guide interactions with their employees (Pratt & Rafaeli, 2001).

Managers and leaders use sensegiving activities to enable and encourage three processes: meaning-making, values construction (Smith et al., 2010), and cognitive shifts in organizational constitutents' perceptions (Foldy et al., 2008). First, middle managers are uniquely positioned to participate in sensegiving activities with supervisors, peers, direct reports, and external stakeholders and clients.

Second, by performing sensegiving activities, middle managers can help their employees make connections between their actions and the values of the organization. Finally, sensegiving activities are also useful for communicating and influencing strategy formation and implementation.

Studies that use a sensegiving lens tend to present frameworks for middle manager activity and suggest examining award-winning organizations as a best practice (Smith et al., 2010; Foldy et al., 2008). By focusing on ongoing or everyday sensemaking and sensegiving activities, these studies help to fill the gap in what is known about what middle managers actually do (Smith et al., 2010). "It became clear that each of them invests tremendous effort into articulating and communicating their values as a means of shaping how workers understand and experience the organization" (Smith et al., 2010, 234).

Strategy and sensegiving may be seen as integral and complementary roles. MMs may have other, traditional responsibilities, such as organizing, planning, controlling, coordinating, etc.; however, it is compelling to consider the dual construction of strategy formation and sensegiving as the universal roles that MMs of the 21st century have in common. It is also interesting to explore the possible relationships between strategy and sensegiving found in middle management in academic libraries.

2.2.4 Middle managers' vulnerability to role conflict and ambiguity

> "In many cases top managers don't know what they should expect from their middle managers, and middle managers themselves often misinterpret their own job responsibilities" (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1996, 30).

Middle managers are vulnerable to role conflict, ambiguity, and turnover due to the inherent nature of their jobs but also due to organizational factors such as structure, policies, rewards and penalties and to organizational context variables such as autonomy, task/skill variety, task identity, management style, feedback from the task and from others, formalization, and level. Managers in boundary-spanning positions are more likely to experience role conflict (Friedman & Podolny, 1992; Kahn et al., 1964; Miles & Perreault, 1976; Whetten, 1978), and the number of roles a manager is expected to play is also related to role conflict (Nandram & Klandermans, 1993; Peterson et al, 1995). Individuals in the middle manager's role set, identified as role senders, may or may not have congruent expectations of the middle manager role. Expectations are those functions and behaviors held by persons in the actor's role set to be defining characteristics of the actor's role. The sources

of these expectations are varied and may lead to differing understandings of the actor's role. If members of the actor's role set have different expectations of the actor, they will evaluate the actor's role performance and effectiveness differently (Lynch, 1976; Gamaluddin, 1973; Bailey, 1981). Two key role theory concepts that are relevant here are *consensus* and *conformity*. *Consensus* denotes agreement among expectations held by members of the role set; *conformity* refers to compliance by the actor to some pattern of or expectation for behavior. Lack of consensus among the members of the actor's role set leaves the actor to determine whose expectations are more important and to whose expectations they will conform. This situation may contribute to the actor's stress and strain, followed by certain coping processes to minimize the negative aspects of stress and strain.

"The basic paradox of restructuring and its implications have often been clouded by outmoded thinking surrounding the role of middle management. As firms restructure around horizontal processes and operational empowerment, those in the middle are often viewed as dead wood. They are seen as representing an obsolete vertical chain of command and as a source of delay, inhibiting the new priority of responsiveness" (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1996, 28).

Structural changes to large corporations have been substantial since the 1980s (Hassard et al., 2009). Larger organizations that were willing and able to invest in IT found that they could keep their balance sheets in order by eliminating now "superfluous" staff, including MMs. This quid pro quo did not always work out as planned, as while much was gained through the addition of IT, much was lost in terms of coordination, institutional memory, and morale in these organizations. When managed well, though, restructuring and IT can be productive bedfellows.

Rather than declining, as earlier predicted, middle management in the 1980s and early 1990s was found to be changing (Kanter, 1986; Dopson & Stewart, 1990). The volatile economic and technological environment of the late 20th century meant that MMs' positions were to be redefined rather than eliminated without cause. In contrast to the stable growth environment and concomitant stable strategic efforts of earlier eras (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1996), organizations were now having to innovate and coordinate rapid external and internal change, and much more information became accessible and available to all. In such environments, MMs as static position-holders became artifacts of the past, and unless they added value to the information they were transmitting, their positions warranted elimination (Kanter, 1986). MMs who were "idea entrepreneurs" and "change masters" were those who could add value to their organizations.

Despite the predictions that IT would supplant and make superfluous middle managers and lead to the de-layering and contraction of middle management (Simon, 1960; Leavitt & Whistler, 1958), it has instead been shown that the implementation of IT may re-shape or enhance the informational role of middle managers rather than reduce their number (Currie & Procter, 2002). The implementation of IT frees MMs to be more proactive in departmental initiatives, more involved in planning activities, and it enables decentralization of decision-making, so frontline employees are empowered to make decisions. After the implementation of IT, MMs are still needed to interpret information for executives and even IT technicians. Potential disadvantages of IT implementation include transparency of performance activities and greater executive access to raw data, leading to fear of âsurveillance" as well as requests for more reports. MMs who are allowed to enhance their informational role in the organization through the use of IT can synthesize information for the executives and provide a link between strategic goals and operational activity (Currie & Procter, 2002).

Strategic restructuring of organizations logically followed the implementation of IT, opportunities of global markets, and the shift from manufacturing to knowledge work. Restructuring to achieve new organizational goals includes the re-organization or elimination of departments, the creation of new units and the development of new capabilities (and the incremental elimination of existing capabilities), plus, in many situations, the flattening of existing hierarchies. Flattening hierarchies means the elimination of organizational layers, mostly at the middle management level, and ideally allows greater communication between operations and senior management and accelerates decision making at the operations level. This movement and goal have been documented in a wide variety of organizations across the globe (Hassard et al., 2009; Osterman, 2008; Feldmann et al., 2013). Flattening hierarchies has advantages and disadvantages, and the move has its advocates and detractors. Removal of administrative layers as a technique for strategic adaptation continues to be recommended in a broad spectrum of organizations, including higher education (Nor, 2009), but eliminating administrative positions simply to remove seemingly superfluous layers can be counterproductive if it results in a devolvement of authority, increased work pressures and workloads, and lowered morale. These outcomes are particularly negative in the public sector, where there are no increased financial returns to offset the deterioration of working conditions (Hassard et al., 2009).

There seems to be an inherent tension underlying the relationship between IT diffusion and

restructuring, even though they are often used to achieve similar goals of increasing efficiency and reducing costs (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1996). On the surface, there is no obvious causal relationship that indicates that if an organization enhances its technological capabilities it must also decrease its managerial layers. Clearly, technology will affect operations and may lead to or follow a change in organizational strategy and structure, but does not necessarily dictate a reduction of managerial staff. Indeed, the middle management ranks are duly qualified and situated to lead these change efforts (Williams, 2001). So why do IT, restructuring and MM layoffs remain closely linked?

Hassard et al. (2009) suggest that the underlying driver that connects restructuring and MM staff reduction is money/cost saving and refer to it as "the new organisational ideology". According to them, the politics of restructuring and the incessant need to eschew bureaucratic paradigms necessitate making organizations as lean as possible, regardless of their overall mission. They also argue that most recent studies of management and organizations focus on restructuring, with the prominent themes of organizational change, the crisis of the monolithic firm, and the individualization of work. So, public sector agencies, non-profit organizations and for-profit companies are all heeding the clarion call of restructure and cut: "The new organisational ideology, therefore, is not just derived from the direct pressures of economic globalisation, but by the politics of restructuring – the fashions for organisational change, for 'lean' management principles, for cutting out wastage and bureaucracy and inculcating a 'performance culture' modelled on cutting-edge multinational corporations" (Hassard et al., 2009, 34).

The combination of IT diffusion, reduced layers and staff cutbacks have meant that MMs not only have to demonstrate added value by being "idea entrepreneurs" and "change masters", but they must also take on more responsibilities. These MMs were expected to take a pivotal role in implementing the changes, and they now felt that they controlled their destiny, with more autonomy, better access to top management now that the hierarchy was flatter, and better and more control of the resources under their purview (Dopson & Stewart, 1990); however, this point of view is in direct contradiction to what scholars have found in studies of MMs in several countries, including the United States, Japan, and the United Kingdom. The new responsibilities still include the monitoring and control operations-related functions (Osterman, 2008; Hassard et al., 2009), which "become less relevant in restructured firms emphasizing horizontal processes and knowledge responsibility" (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1996, ix). Retaining operating responsibilities decreases their potential involvement in

strategy formation and implementation, for which they are uniquely situated and qualified (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1996; Williams, 2001). This combination of factors has also increased middle managers' stress levels and significantly changed career advancement expectations and pathways (Osterman, 2008; Hassard et al., 2009; Feldmann et al., 2013). Interestingly, as middle management positions have diminished, there have been numerous calls for leaders and leadership training in several professions. Previously, middle management positions served as junior executive ranks, where aspiring senior managers could not only practice their management skills but also develop their leadership styles. Toward the end of the 20th century, leadership institutes led by institutions such as Harvard and Stanford Universities and the Association of Research Libraries became a cottage industry.

Restructuring is a two-edged sword that has the potential to create cost savings, but if the primary outcome is the loss of knowledgeable staff, especially middle managers who coordinate the activities of various functional units, efficiency and cost savings are decreased in the short term and may not be recouped in the long term. Restructuring must be driven by strategic goals rather than a desire to simply reduce costs (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1996), and restructuring itself may not reduce costs nor increase profits and outcomes. "Effective restructuring must do more than lower costs. It must realign organizational resources, including managerial talent, in a way that provides the firm with new capabilities – capabilities aimed at innovation and responsiveness to customers" (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1996).

MMs are central figures in the coordination of operations and strategy implementation because of their critical positions in organizations' technical and social networks, and their boundary-spanning capabilities (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1996; Currie, 2000). These are vital positions and skills to have in an organization that is deploying new technologies, restructuring, serving new customers, or otherwise implementing change. The MMs have a strong understanding of the current organizational environment, employees and customers, and may be well-poised to help them understand the new strategy. The elimination of these capabilities during restructuring undermines any potential increased efficiencies (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1996); also, seasoned MMs know how to be creative and crafty to accomplish organizational goals to counter-balance top management's singular focus on efficiency.

In addition to the classic managerial activities identified earlier, middle managers also perform technical work relating to their professional or functional specialization (Hales, 2001; Bailey, 1981;

Lynch, 1976; Borman & Brush, 1993). As the bridge between frontline employees and executive level decision makers, they must take their own perceptions of the work and translate them into organized chunks of information to present to senior management. Perception-based knowing involves direct observation of the phenomena and can be considered richer and more accurate than schema-based knowing, which occurs after the phenomena have been perceived, labeled and categorized. The categorization of the phenomena leads to a more limited, definitional understanding that can become problematic in crisis situations when phenomena need to be reframed. When organizational decision makers, who are most likely not frontline operatives, have to coordinate responses as the social complexity increases, a collapse of sensemaking is more likely. " . . .[P]eople who coordinate tend to remember the name of the thing seen, rather than the thing that was seen and felt. If significant events occur that are beyond the reach of these names, then coordinated people will be the last to know about those significant events. If a coordinated group updates its understanding infrequently and rarely challenges its labels, there is a higher probability that it eventually will be overwhelmed by troubles that have been incubating unnoticed" (Weick, 2005, 163).

Middle managers experience tension, pressure and conflict in trying to juggle competing demands (Hales, 2001; Honea, 2000); and they have considerable choice and negotiation over the nature and boundaries of the job and how it is done (Hales, 2001; Patillo et al., 2009). These issues, plus organizational factors such as structure and continued technical proficiency subject middle managers to a higher level of role conflict and role ambiguity than other organizational actors. Their experience of conflict and ambiguity may have deleterious effects on the middle managers themselves as well as the organization overall.

2.2.5   Impacts of role conflict and role ambiguity

<u>Role conflict</u>

Role conflict describes the âconcurrent appearance of two or more incompatible expectations for the behavior of a person" (Biddle, 1986, 82). Middle managers may be vulnerable to role conflict because they typically hold boundary-spanning positions; that is, they coordinate the work of and collaborate with multiple work groups, including external clients. Employees in boundary-spanning positions experience greater role conflict (Kahn et al., 1964; Friedman, 1992; Whetten, 1978; Miles & Perreault, 1976), as well as those who hold multiple roles (Floyd & Lane, 2000; Nandram & Klandermans, 1993; Peterson et al., 1995). This exposure to a wide range of role senders (supervisors,

peers, direct reports, external stakeholders and clients) also puts middle managers at risk of role conflict and role ambiguity.

Role conflict has a positive association with and is an antecedent to these negative consequences: tension, anxiety, turnover intentions, low individual productivity, job dissatisfaction, and physiological symptoms such as increased heart rate and high blood pressure (Jackson & Schuler, 1985). Using Floyd and Wooldridge's (1996) framework, Madden looked at the overall engagement by middle managers in strategic activities and found that middle managers engaged in more strategic activities reported more role conflict (Madden 2013). The current study extends that line of research by looking not only at the overall frequency of engagement in strategic activities, but also examining the component factors to determine in which kinds of strategic activities academic library middle managers are engaged, and the relationship between types of strategic activities and role conflict and ambiguity. Role conflict also leads to behaviors that relieve role stress and strain, including lying (Grover, 1993) and severing ties with role senders (Robinson, 2012). Education level and job tenure may moderate these effects (Jackson & Schuler, 1985).

Role conflict has a negative association with the individual's organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and job involvement (Jackson & Schuler, 1985), and with the organization's performance (Madden, 2013). Jackson and Schuler (1985), in their meta-analysis of 96 studies, found no relationship between role conflict and the individual's organizational level, but Murphy and Gable later found that among administrators, role conflict decreases as the individual's organization level rises (Murphy & Gable, 1988), suggesting that higher level managers experience less role conflict than lower level managers.

<u>Role ambiguity</u>

Role ambiguity occurs when organizational actors are unsure about the behaviors and activities involved in their jobs, are unsure about the criteria upon which they will be evaluated, and may be uncertain about how their jobs fit into the overall organizational strategy (He et al., 2011). The more clearly the expectations are articulated, the more likely is conformity to those expectations (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Stein, 1982; Van de Vliert, 1981). Increased feedback from role senders, especially leaders, reduces role ambiguity (Jackson & Schuler, 1985). Role ambiguity is negatively associated with organizational commitment (Ngo et al., 2005; Slattery et al., 2008; Jackson & Schuler, 1985), job satisfaction (Ngo et al., 2005; Slattery et al., 2008; Jackson & Schuler, 1985; Abramis, 1994), job

involvement (Jackson & Schuler, 1985), and job performance (Jackson & Schuler, 1985; Abramis, 1994; Tubre & Collins, 2000; Gilboa et al., 2008).

Role ambiguity may or may not increase as the individual's organization level rises. Katz and Kahn (1966) predicted that ambiguity would be greater for those in executive-level positions, but Jackson and Schuler, in their meta-analysis of 96 studies, found no relationship between ambiguity and organization level (Jackson & Schuler, 1985).

Employees in boundary-spanning positions (such as middle managers) experience greater role ambiguity and job-centered burnout (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993; Parkington & Schneider, 1979); and role ambiguity is also an antecedent to burnout (Ambrose et al., 2014). Burnout is very costly for organizations, resulting in absenteeism, increased medical costs, and reduced productivity (Lewin & Sager, 2009). However, role ambiguity is a factor upon which management can have a positive impact (Singh & Rhoads, 1991). Organizational structure and management styles can influence role ambiguity (Walker et al., 1975). In environments where employees experience low feedback, unclear expectations, low organization formalization (Jackson & Schuler, 1985), have low experience or job tenure (Jackson & Schuler, 1985), and hold boundary-spanning positions, role ambiguity is higher. These organizational context variables impact role ambiguity more than they impact role conflict (Jackson & Schuler, 1985).

Role ambiguity leads to job dissatisfaction and physiological symptoms, although these effects may be moderated by education level and job tenure (Jackson & Schuler, 1985). Role ambiguity is also positively associated with tension (Jackson & Schuler, 1985).

<u>Turnover intentions</u>

Employees who experience role conflict or role ambiguity may exhibit turnover intentions as a consequence of these experiences. Turnover intentions capture an individual's attitudes and perceptions about his or her job (Lum et al., 1998; Mobley et al., 1979); they are predictors of voluntary turnover (Griffeth et al., 2000; Hom et al., 1992; Griffeth & Hom, 1995; Mobley et al., 1979); and they measure specific behaviors related to organizational withdrawal (Lum et al., 1998). Rather than a focus on turnover itself, this study uses turnover intentions to explore the MM's wish or desire to withdraw from the organization.

Turnover intentions are positively related to role conflict (Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Babin & Boles, 1998; Brief & Aldag, 1976; Hamner & Tosi, 1974; Örtqvist & Wincent, 2006; Madden, 2013).

Turnover intentions are negatively associated with organizational commitment; low organizational commitment, caused by role ambiguity or role conflict, may induce turnover intentions (Mowday et al., 1982). However, role conflict mediates the relationship between middle managers' activity and turnover intentions (Madden, 2013).

2.3 Academic library middle managers

There is limited empirical research on MMs in libraries. LIS researchers do not often explore this aspect of the profession, nor do researchers in other disciplines use libraries as a context for management studies. There are numerous practitioner-based writings by and about library middle managers. Similar to what was found in the general management literature regarding the identification of middle managers in organizations, defining characteristics discussed include the location in the organizational hierarchy, types of responsibilities, and the type or number of subordinates. An additional consideration here is the size of the library.

Most organizations of any size have organizational charts, job descriptions and other official documents that prescribe organizational structure, reporting lines, behavioral norms, and evaluation criteria. Although the managerial activities described throughout the previous sections might apply universally to managers, organizational type must be considered in order to paint a more specific picture. Industry type and organization size influence roles and role behaviors (Lynch, 1976), so it is useful to focus on libraries as a context. Not only are libraries unique among organizations and professions, academic libraries are a specialized type of library and there is significant variation among them in terms of size, structure and mission. Libraries are unique organizations that must maintain bureaucratic hierarchies while supporting the work of semi-independent professionals (Lynch, 1976).

Several large studies in the 1970s situated in public, academic, special and corporate libraries identified middle managers as junior executives and senior supervisory personnel in the direct line of authority and communication between the top levels of management and first-line supervisory personnel (Gamaluddin, 1973; Bailey, 1981). In the library organizational structures of the time, the titles and positions were perhaps more easily identified as middle management: department heads and staff specialists with titles such as Head of Cataloging, Science Librarian, Branch Librarian, or Personnel Manager (Bailey, 1981). These were the "in-between" managerial positions found in the typical places on the organizational chart; the middle managers were supervised by others and the middle managers supervised supervisors.

Bailey distinguishes middle managers from âsupervisory managers", those at the first level, who supervise non-supervisory employees, and âare in charge of one generally cohesive or specialized function" (Bailey, 1981, 3). Titles for such frontline supervisory positions included Circulation Librarian, Cataloger of Nonprint Media, and Serials Librarian. Conversely, middle managers were charged with directing and coordinating multiple dissimilar functions (Bailey, 1981). Bailey also expressed that the type of employee supervised is a distinguishing characteristic moreso than the number of employees supervised.

Many LIS middle managers retain some technical or subject area-specific duties (Lynch, 1976; Drucker, 1976; Sullivan, 1992). In organizations such as libraries and schools, middle managers are often expected to have technical expertise, and the level of respect and credibility they garner may be related to their technical and professional competence, knowledge and prowess (Lynch, 1976; Gurr & Drysdale, 2013).

In 1975, based on a study of 82 positions advertised by 56 academic libraries (most of which were ARL members), the average middle manager position required special subject knowledge, reported directly to an assistant or associate library director, required an ALA-accredited master's degree, required five years of experience (generic), and supervised staff (Bailey, 1981). Bailey addresses the difficulties of attempting to draw an overall profile of middle managers in libraries, as job assignments and qualifications vary across types of libraries, and "different criteria may be used in determining individual managerial jobs within the same organizations. The jobs of the department heads may be determined by the number and types of employees, the size of collections in a branch, or the size of the budget for the department" (Bailey, 1981, 177). As libraries have evolved, restructured, outsourced, added new capabilities and in many cases, flattened their hierarchies, middle managers across organizations may have more expectations in common than was previously thought.

While the middle manager expectations across organizations may be common, within the organization there may be competing expectations. One contributing factor is employee type or status. Professionalism is in conflict with management in libraries, due to the differences in values, standards, ethics and goals (Honea, 2000; Lynch, 1976). Professionals measure their competence, skills and achievements against their disciplinary peers, who are indeed usually external to their own organization, and they set their own personal career goals and objectives. Managers look to their employers to determine mission, goals, objectives, values and standards. Professionals look outside of

their organizations for validation; managers expect validation from their organizations (Honea, 2000). These competing interests can create tension in organizations when managers attempt to supervise their professional staff, and in fact, "In some libraries the expectations of the library managers have conflicted with the expectations of the librarians within the unit" (Lynch, 1976, 255).

There are many approaches used to identify or define middle manager in the library literature. Academic library middle managers are often identified as middle managers by their place in the organization's hierarchy as department heads (Binder, 1973; Rooney, 2010; Plate, 1969; Bailey, 1981; Comes, 1978; Sullivan, 1992). The number and classification of direct reports has been reported as an important characteristic of academic library middle managers. In one of the earliest empirical studies to focus on middle management in academic libraries, Plate defined middle managers as "those personnel who directly supervise four or more professional librarians. Department heads and section chiefs are the core of middle management" (Plate, 1969, abstract). Bailey, in her studies of academic library middle management (1981), also stipulated that middle managers were department heads or section chiefs; they also supervised other supervisors who were not necessarily professional librarians. Recently, student population range served as an indicator that organizational structure included middle managers as department heads (Rooney, 2010). Middle managers are also designated as "head(s) of a specific unit operation, department, or branch library" (Mosley, 2004, 1).

Academic library middle managers have been characterized by the types of responsibilities they have. The primary responsibilities of Bailey's (1981) middle managers involved the administration and supervision of a function or unit; the secondary responsibilities were related to selecting, training and evaluating employees. Many academic library middle managers are also responsible for coordination among their department's units and with other departments. Library middle managers are responsible for the coordination of multiple functions (Bailey, 1981).

Interestingly, several practitioner articles and handbooks (Mosley, 2004; Evans & Ward, 2003; Aho & Bennett, 2011) identify first-time academic library managers as middle managers, regardless of position, title, or place in the hierarchy. These academic library middle managers' responsibilities do not always line up neatly with a particular position. Many of these first-time middle managers may have never held front-line supervisory positions, and they may have gained the middle management rank due to their performance in specific areas of expertise (Sullivan, 1992).

There is not much evidence about academic library middle manager experiences; most of the

existing research about library administrators is about leadership, especially the traits of current and aspiring library directors. Studies have focused on the managerial roles of library directors (Moskowitz, 1986), role conflict among academic librarians, decision-making and leadership skills among academic library executives (Gamaluddin, 1973), and the attributes of academic and public library directors (Hernon et al., 2003). These studies include extensive lists of traits and abilities that academic library leaders have and the competencies that future library leaders should develop, based on Delphi studies and interviews with library directors (Hernon et al., 2003). These lists are so extensive that they must be situational; it would be impossible for one manager to have or obtain all of the skills and attributes indicated. ARL member libraries reported that soft skills and personal competencies were the most important skills necessary for 21st century library senior level managers. These include strategic planning, change management, vision, and big picture thinking, keeping up with library and higher education trends, excellent communication and interpersonal skills, collaboration, entrepreneurial skills and understanding scholarly communication, emerging trends, and digital curation (DeLong et al., 2012).

Previous research has focused on decision making of middle managers in public and academic libraries. One study found that the majority of Florida's state university main libraries' managers favored the behavioral decision style. This study also reported no relationship between decision style and gender, age, or highest degree, but identified a relationship between decision style and years of administrative experience, ethnicity, positions and educational major (Alqarni, 2003). In the public library realm, middle managers demonstrated a reluctance to make decisions autonomously (Gamaluddin, 1973). Gamaluddin also reported that professional staff members in the library did not know what the duties and responsibilities of the middle managers were, which was problematic when employees were asked to evaluate their supervisors.

The practitioner literature addresses the perceived role behaviors and expectations based on the authors' experiences and theories borrowed from management, sociology and psychology literature. Prominent among the roles identified is that of change agent (Sullivan, 1992; Evans & Ward, 2003; Mosley, 2004), and there is often a focus on acquiring new technical skills, such as fundraising (Doan & Morris, 2012), assessment (Chang & Bright, 2012; Evans & Ward, 2003) and marketing and diversity (Evans & Ward, 2003). Classic duties such as planning, organizing, communication, budgeting, control, etc., are well-covered in these texts, with nods to teamwork, collaboration, entrepreneurship

and innovative thinking. Implicit in these role behaviors and expectations are sensegiving activities, both symbolic and tangible, and middle managers' advantageous positions between and among various stakeholders to facilitate communication among the multiple organizational layers. There is little to no mention of middle managers' role in strategy.

As shown in the previous sections, determining an operational definition for middle manager is difficult. Although most people have a basic understanding of middle management and might agree that middle managers fall "in-between", getting beyond this basic agreement in academic libraries surfaces a myriad of difficulties:

- does the size of the library matter?
- does the middle manager report directly to an associate director?
- whom does the middle manager supervise, if anyone?
- what are the responsibilities of the position?
- does the middle manager retain any functional duties?

Floyd and Wooldridge's strategic middle manager is "any individual who is regularly involved in, or interfaces with, the organization's operations and who has some access to upper management" (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1996, 111). In their work, Floyd and Wooldridge argue that the middle manager is uniquely positioned and qualified for a strategic role in contemporary organizations. This is a fitting, if vague, definition and is potentially applicable in academic libraries, based on the following considerations. First, the characterization is applicable regardless of library size and helps in attempting to normalize middle manager responsibilities across organizations. This definition excludes AULs and frontline managers in large organizations, yet might include them in smaller libraries. It also addresses the "two levels from the CEO and two levels from the operators" parameter that could only apply in large organizations. Floyd and Wooldridge's MM has access to the executive team but is not a member. In this scenario, who reports to the MM becomes unimportant. Secondly, classic management responsibilities become less of the focus (although still important in some cases), and roles might be a more relevant discourse (such as strategy formation and sensegiving). This definition also allows for the idea of a first-time manager as a middle manager. In the current study, library directors were asked to identify their middle managers based on the Floyd and Wooldridge definition, which allows for the study of middle management in large research libraries as well as small academic libraries.

CHAPTER 3
Methodology

This study explored the meanings of "middle manager" roles in academic libraries through a naturalistic investigation based on the theoretical frameworks of role theory and strategic activity. Middle managers hold boundary-spanning positions that coordinate the work of their direct reports, their peers, and their supervisors, each of whom may have different expectations of the middle manager role. The differing expectations that are sent to the middle manager may cause the middle manager to experience role conflict, role ambiguity, and turnover intentions. Lack of role clarity and role consensus among staff negatively impacts the organization; academic libraries that are concerned about performance, organizational effectiveness, and staff retention will be interested in gaining an understanding of the impact of conflicting expectations on their middle managers.

This multiple case study focused on the middle manager role expectations of three types of employees in academic libraries: the middle managers themselves, their senior managers, and subordinates who report directly to middle managers, in order to gain an understanding of the expectations of each of these role senders and to discover the relationships between these expectations and the middle managers' experiences of role conflict, role ambiguity, and turnover intentions. This intensive study closely examined a small sample of academic library employees in some detail. The nature of the research questions suggested naturalistic inquiry as the most appropriate approach to research design, data collection, analysis, and reporting because this method emphasizes intensive research in context. An intensive naturalistic study may take a variety of forms, possibly including ethnography, ethnology, multisite case studies, among others, that can enhance our understanding of, in this case, the nature of middle management in academic libraries. Usually, the naturalistic paradigm is used when the researcher is doing an exploratory study or is not formally testing hypotheses; however, as in this case, the researcher had a particular framework or understanding that lent focus to what might otherwise have been a more comprehensive, less bounded culture study. With the academic library as the cultural context, observation, interviews, and document analysis as

data collection methods presented opportunities as well as challenges.

This intensive, naturalistic case study is influenced by the extended case method (ECM) in its approach to analysis. ECM is applied to naturalistic studies in order to "extract the general from the unique, to move from the âmicro' to the âmacro,' and to connect the present to the past in anticipation of the future, all by building on preexisting theory" (Burawoy, 1998). To achieve the goals of an intensive study, triangulation of data is a critical technique. To that end, the current study employed several methods to gather qualitative and quantitative data. Researchers use a mixed or multiple methods design to maximize benefits obtained from having both qualitative and quantitative data from multiple methods in the same project. Different methods may each provide different types of data, and each may access different aspects of the phenomenon under study, so that by integrating findings from qualitative and quantitative data, the study will have increased scope, density, detail, and even increased validity (Solomon, 2014). This study used participant observation, interviews, document analysis and psychometric scales. This chapter presents the methodology used to conduct this study. Provided are the research design, research questions, participant selection, procedures, instruments, data collection and data analyses.

3.1   Research method and design appropriateness

In a preliminary study of a middle manager set in an academic library at a large, private university in the South, role conflict and ambiguity were identified as factors that fit my observations, as described in a previous section. In that pilot study, a grounded theory approach was employed to see what theories of middle management might emerge, and through analysis, elements related to role theory were discovered. Role theory is a viable framework with which to explore the experiences of academic library organizational actors. Multiple approaches have been employed to study the phenomenon of role conflict or role ambiguity among middle managers. Standardized questionnaires have been used to gather quantitative data about role expectations (Jusoh et al., 2011) etc.), role conflict (Madden, 2013; Floyd & Wooldridge, 2000) etc.), and turnover intentions (Madden, 2013) from a large amount of subjects; other research designs have used observations (Hales & Mustapha, 2000) and interviews (Robinson, 2012; Hales & Mustapha, 2000; Mantere, 2008) to collect and analyze qualitative data related to middle managers or mid-level positions and role factors.

Few of the above-cited studies gathered data from all of the role senders in a particular organizational setting. Katz and Kahn (1966) suggest that this comprehensive view would be most useful

in understanding role behavior in an organizational setting. Gurr and Drysdale (2013) provide an exception in their study of middle-level school leaders. They interviewed other members of the middle-level school leaders' role set: principals, senior leaders, and teachers were interviewed to gain their perceptions on middle-level leadership. Gurr and Drysdale also conducted document analyses. Such an intensive, naturalistic approach is more likely to deliver the rich data enabling the identification of the competing role expectations and perceptions directed at one focal person - the middle manager in academic libraries - and whether or not this person experiences role conflict, ambiguity, or turnover intentions. Also, in previous studies of middle manager activity, conflicting findings about their involvement in strategic activity appear to be related to the research design; when data collection occurred through interviews only, few strategic activities were reported. This study attempts to address these methodological issues by gathering data from the middle managers as well as the members of their role set through a multi-methods design. This chapter discusses the methodology for the study of the roles of middle managers in academic libraries. The choice of methodology was based on a determination of the best fit for an exploration of the meanings of the middle manager role in an academic library setting from the points of view of several organizational actors and the organization itself. The range of possibilities was narrowed to the naturalistic paradigm because of the intent to understand a particular social situation and a role within a particular context.

Social research utilizes quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data is typically collected using methods "such as surveys and experiments that record variation in social life in terms of categories that vary in amount. Data that are treated as quantitative are either numbers or attributes that can be ordered in terms of magnitude" (Schutt, 2009, 17). Participant observation, interviewing, and focus groups are methods that are typically used to collect qualitative data, and are "designed to capture social life as participants experience it, rather than in categories predetermined by the researcher. Data that are treated as qualitative are mostly written or spoken words or observations that do not have a direct numerical interpretation" (Schutt, 2009). This study utilized both qualitative and quantitative data to create a bricolage describing the phenomenon that is the academic library middle manager role.

Miles and Huberman (1994) emphasize these recurring features of naturalistic research:

1. Qualitative research is conducted through an intense and/or prolonged contact with a "field" or life situation. These situations are typically "banal" or normal ones, reflective of the everyday life of individuals, groups, societies, and organizations.

2. The researcher's role is to gain a "holistic" (systemic, encompassing, integrated) overview of the context under study: its logic, its arrangements, its explicit and implicit rules.

3. The researcher attempts to capture data on the perceptions of local actors "from the inside," through a process of deep attentiveness, of empathetic understanding (*Verstehen*), and of suspending or "bracketing" preconceptions about the topics under discussion.

4. Reading through these materials, the researcher may isolate certain themes and expressions that can be reviewed with informants, but that should be maintained in their original forms throughout the study.

5. A main task is to explicate the ways people in particular settings come to understand, account for, take action, and otherwise manage their day-to-day situations.

6. Many interpretations of this material are possible, but some are more compelling for theoretical reasons or on grounds of internal consistency.

7. Relatively little standardized instrumentation is used at the outset. The researcher is essentially the main "instrument device" in the study.

8. Most analysis is done with words. The words can be assembled, subclustered, broken into semiotic segments. They can be organized to permit the researcher to contrast, compare, analyze, and bestow patterns upon them. (p. 6-7)

3.1.1   Case study research design

This study utilized the case study research approach, a common approach in the social sciences (Creswell, 2007), which is employed to intensively understand social phenomena. The case study approach emerged from social anthropology's application of ethnographic methods (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Ethnographic methods are descriptive, involving the collection and analysis of multiple data sources (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The key analytic task is to "uncover and explicate the

ways in which people in particular (work) settings come to understand, account for, take action and otherwise manage their day-to-day situation" (Van Maanen, 1979).

The "case study" has been used as both a process of inquiry about a case and the product of that inquiry. A variety of methods can be employed in the service of a case study, and "case study is not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied. By whatever methods, we choose to study the case" (Stake, 2003). What is important is the underlying epistemological question of: What can be learned from the single case? (Stake, 2003).

Stake makes a distinction between an intrinsic case study and an instrumental case study. An intrinsic case study is undertaken because "the researcher wants better understanding of this particular case" (2003, 136), not to build upon theory or generalize to some universal phenomenon. Conversely, an instrumental case study is designed to shed light on a particular issue or facilitate our understanding of something else. Finally, Stake describes a third type of case study, a collective case study, which is an "instrumental study extended to several cases" (2003, 138); the cases are chosen because they may lead to deeper understanding or better theorizing about a larger number of cases. Stake also asserts that in an instrumental case study or a collective case study, the critical issues are more likely to be known in advance and the researcher can take advantage of already developed instruments and preconceived coding schemes. "Many social anthropologists are concerned with the genesis or refinement of theory. They may begin with a conceptual framework and take it out to the field for testing, refinement, or qualification" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, 8). The current study utilized a multiple case study design to examine the roles of middle managers in three academic libraries. Also called comparative case studies (Stake prefers collective case study), multiple case studies enable one to intensively study a case and then compare it with a limited set of other cases. The literature presents many options for case study research design: they can most often be exploratory, confirmatory, descriptive or evaluative (Choemprayong & Wildemuth, 2009). The present study was designed to comprehensively describe certain aspects of middle manager roles and to examine the appropriateness of role theory and strategic activity as frameworks within the context of the academic library. As such, the research is descriptive and confirmatory. Accordingly, it can also be classified as instrumental because it seeks to understand a particular question or problem (Stake, 2003), that is, role conflict and ambiguity.

This study used non-probability purposive sampling to select cases that could be comparable,

but also with contexts supplying enough diversity to facilitate contrasts in a cross-case analysis (Choemprayong & Wildemuth, 2009). Using what Yin calls replication logic, it was important to carefully select cases to allow the anticipation of similar or contrasting results across the multiple cases (Yin, 1981). Similarly, Stake maintains that multicase studies must select cases that will remain bound together by the same program or concept, while still providing enough contextual diversity to show how the program performs in different environments (Stake, 1995). Accordingly, this study approach used three organizations that have very important similarities: they are all academic libraries situated in four-year, degree-granting institutions of higher learning with hierarchical organizational structures and are located within the same state education system. There are important similarities to be found in the conditions that inform their missions, their strategies, and their operations. There are also important differences found due to their specific region of the state, their organizational culture and traditions, the backgrounds and training of their employees, their clientele, and their specific divisions of labor into functional departments and units. These differing environments may show important distinctions regarding the expectations of the middle managers and their involvement in strategic activity.

3.1.2   Case study methods

A variety of methods are appropriate in a case study research design. Common methods of case study are observation, interview, artifact/document collection, coding, data management, and interpretation (Stake, 1995; Solomon, 2014). In a confirmatory study, instrumentation is useful for comparison with other previous studies and for managing the data across multiple cases. Miles and Huberman (1994) describe three levels of qualitative-quantitative data linkage: quantizing, in which qualitative information is counted; linkage between distinct data types, in which qualitative data is compared to numerical data; and multimethod design, which may include interventions and experiments. This study used the second level, linking data types, to compare qualitative data from observations, interviews, and documents to middle managers' numerical scores on a questionnaire. Observation provides an opportunity to collect data from informants who are in their natural setting. In this case, the natural setting was the academic library, and the subjects are the middle managers, their bosses, their peers, and their direct reports. Generally, observation may be direct or passive, obtrusive or unobtrusive; the observer may be a participant in the setting who takes part in activities and/or has explicit relationships with the subjects, or the observer may observe from afar and not

take a role in the setting. Participant observation has been broadly defined to include the explicit placement of the observer in the setting, with interaction with the subjects, without the observer having work responsibility in the setting. Methods employed in this study to gather data included observation, interviews, and document analysis, the strengths and weaknesses of which are explained below.

There are several strengths of observation as a method for data collection. It allows the researcher to focus on interactions among subjects, including non-verbal behaviors, that could not otherwise be known. The researcher may also become aware of contextual clues that explain or enhance the understanding of the phenomena being studied. The behaviors that the researcher observes may confirm previously thought ideas or conclusions, and the researcher may observe the values of the organization as they are enacted. The researcher does not need to rely on the subjects to recall behaviors, but can observe them in situ.

Observations have a number of weaknesses as well as strengths. First of all, access to the site may be difficult to achieve; organizations may not want to grant access or may want to control access to individuals and influence outcomes; individuals may not want to be observed, or their behavior may change because they know they are being observed (however, this effect may weaken over time). Granted access, especially in the case of participant observation, subject/observer interaction may influence both the behaviors of the subject and the observer, causing different behavior than might occur if the observer were not present. An observer cannot see everything, even if using a recording technology, and may miss behaviors that are important to the study. Even observations scheduled in advance to capture particular situations may be thwarted by observer effects or otherwise missed opportunities. Many elements are hidden or implicit, and the observer has to take care regarding the misinterpretation of participants' words and actions.

Interviews allow for in-depth, one-on-one data gathering where the subject describes phenomena from their point-of-view. Interviews may be structured, semi-structured, or unstructured. In this study, interviews provided a mechanism for talking with informants in private settings, allowing the interviewees to confidentially express themselves, generally without fear of exposure.

Like observations, interviews have inherent strengths and weaknesses. Semi-structured interviews, with the same set of questions given to each employee type, allow the researcher to gather basic demographic, behavioral, and cognitive data as well as hear the point-of-view of the participant

in their own words. Given adequate probes, the participant might reveal unexpected information that moves the research forward and helps the researcher understand the setting. Data from similar interviewees (in this study, the same employee type), can be analyzed for commonalities and differences in how they talk about or otherwise characterize the phenomena being studied.

With interviews, weaknesses abound. The questions have to be carefully designed, with appropriate probes, in order to get adequate responses from the participant. In the case of semi-structured and unstructured interviews, the skill of the interviewer is extremely important, as well as the establishment of rapport between the interviewer and the respondent. The free-flowing data from these interviews present coding challenges, and some of the unexpected information, noted as a benefit above, may be unwelcome and send the interview into unwanted territory. The researcher is also at the mercy of the individuals in the organization, many of whom may not want to be interviewed or may not be consoled by the promise of confidentiality to honestly express themselves regarding sensitive information.

Likewise, document analysis is a useful method in a naturalistic inquiry, and it has its strengths and weaknesses. Techniques for discovery include discourse analysis and content analysis. In many cases, these kinds of documents are easily accessible, even in the case of private universities; however, not every academic library has its documents broadcast on the Internet, and some HR departments might not allow researchers access to specific job descriptions.

Weaknesses of document analysis, in this study, included access to the documents for examination; the absence of similar documents across multiple sites; and the interpretation of explicit and/or implicit content. If similar documents are not available across the academic library sites targeted for the study, the opportunity for comparison across sites is limited. Decisions on coding are subject to researcher epistemology and research goals; even if the researcher intends to focus on explicit content, it is likely that individuals do not articulate values and norms in the same way as official documents, and so some interpretation is required. This is a necessary weakness of document analysis in this case because of the interest in triangulation of methods to produce "truth" and increase trustworthiness.

3.1.3 Research design trustworthiness

The criteria for assessing the integrity and quality of a naturalistic study differ from the concepts used in positivist research. Guba and Lincoln (1982) suggest establishing trustworthiness through credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. A number of techniques can be employed

to enhance the trustworthiness of a naturalistic study. Credibility is the extent to which the data adequately reflect the construct being studied (i.e., whether the findings reflect the 'truth' or are just an artifact of the study). To increase the credibility of naturalistic research, triangulation is a useful technique. Using complementary methods helps to reveal truth from multiple perspectives and in multiple ways, which matches one of the axioms of the social constructionist's paradigm. The use of observation, document analysis and interviews triangulate data collection to identify some consistent reality and increase credibility. Confirming findings with participants, by asking if they agree with researcher observations and summaries, is another way to enhance credibility. Long term sustained observation or continued involvement in the setting enhances credibility, as does the retention of raw data, making it available for further analysis. Additional coders and measuring intercoder reliability might also enhance credibility.

The concept of transferability refers to the extent to which the results can be applied to another context. Transferability can be enhanced through thick description of the setting, situations, and participants. Describing in great detail the elements of the study, design, sampling, and limitations gives a good sense of the applicability of the findings to other research settings, although the goal of an intensive study is not generalizability. Descriptions focused by the conceptual frameworks of role conflict and ambiguity and middle manager strategic activity allow for consistent comparisons across multiple cases.

Dependability refers to the extent to which the findings of an inquiry can be repeated if the inquiry were replicated with similar participants in a similar context. The dependability of the study can be enhanced during the data collection, analysis, and reporting phases. During data collection, it is important to define all the processes and procedures used, to keep a record of the performance of the procedures, and to perform them systematically, rather than in a haphazard or "intuitive" way. One danger is to slip into analysis without intention. In any naturalistic study, data collection and analysis may go hand-in-hand, but the process should be recorded along with decisions and actions that result from this ongoing interaction between data collection and analysis. During the reporting phase, thick description, as described above, helps study dependability.

Finally, confirmability is the degree to which the findings of an inquiry can be confirmed by others as being a faithful and balanced representation of the participants' views. To enhance confirmability, Guba and Lincoln (and others) advocate researcher reflexivity as a part of the analysis process (and

data collection phase); keeping a journal helps researchers process and record their own thoughts and keep personal interpretations and conclusions explicit. Reporting these interpretations and other known biases and limitations and reflecting on how they may have influenced the analysis helps the reader have confidence in the researcher's conclusions, or, at least, gives the reader appropriate caveats. If the researcher has taken most of the steps given here and above, the reader will probably have enough details about the study to draw some of their own conclusions from the findings. One way to mitigate contextual bias is for the researcher to investigate in settings with which they are not familiar; however, familiarity with the context has also been noted as an advantage in qualitative research (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Burawoy, 1991).

These four concepts of trustworthiness may be seen as corresponding to the positivist ideals of internal validity, external validity, replicability, and objectivity. In describing the extended case method, Burawoy argues that rather than attempting to rationalize naturalistic research within the positive science paradigm, researchers must accept the reflexive model of science as "a model of science that embraces not detachment but engagement as the road to knowledge" with its own standards for rigor. The inter-subjectivity of scientist and subject of study is "a virtue to be exploited" rather than avoided (Burawoy, 1998).

3.1.4 The researcher's role

According to Miles and Huberman (1994), some markers of a good qualitative researcher-as-instrument are:

- some familiarity with the phenomenon and the setting under study
- strong conceptual interests
- a multidisciplinary approach, as opposed to a narrow grounding or focus in a single discipline
- good "investigative" skills, including doggedness, the ability to draw people out, and the ability to ward off premature closure (p. 38)

" . . . [A]lthough unfamiliarity with the phenomenon or setting allows for a fertile 'decentering,' it also can lead to relatively naive, easily misled, easily distracted fieldwork, along with the collection of far too much data" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, 38).

My perception of academic libraries, librarians, and library administration has been shaped by my personal experiences. From 1999 to 2008, I served as a librarian and then a library administrator

on university campuses of 10,000 students to 35,000 students. Since 2010, I have taught and advised students in a prominent school of information and library science. I maintain memberships in library organizations, and many of my friends and associates are middle managers, librarians or library school faculty. I believe this understanding of the context and role enhances my awareness, knowledge, and sensitivity to many of the challenges and issues of middle management in academic libraries and assisted me in communicating with the informants in this study. I brought knowledge of both the structure and mission of the academic library and the experience of the middle manager in that setting. I also brought a multidisciplinary perspective, having trained as a musician and a journalist, and having practiced both crafts professionally.

Due to previous experiences working in academic libraries as a middle manager and teaching management to future academic librarians, I brought certain viewpoints to this study. Although every effort was made to ensure objectivity, these viewpoints inevitably shape the way I viewed and understood the data I collected and the way I interpreted my experiences. I believe middle managers face unique challenges and that few people in organizations understand their role. My goal was to tell the informants' stories, not my own; inevitably there will be some overlap, but I agree with this statement:

"On balance, we believe that a knowledgeable practitioner with conceptual interests and more than one disciplinary perspective is often a better research 'instrument' in a qualitative study: more refined, more bias resistant, more economical, quicker to home in on the core processes that hold the case together, and more ecumenical in the search for conceptual meaning" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, 38).

This naturalistic study employed an intensive, multi-level case study method to examine the meanings of middle manager in the academic library setting. The study focused on academic library middle manager activity, the expectations of the middle manager's role set, and how middle manager activity levels impact the middle manager's experience of role conflict, role ambiguity, and turnover intentions.

3.1.5   Data collection overview

Using participant observation, interviews, document analysis, and psychometric scales, data were collected from academic library senior-level managers, middle managers, and subordinates. All participants were asked about their expectations of middle manager activity and behavior. In

addition, middle managers were asked to submit responses to three psychometric scales: the abridged role conflict and ambiguity scales, the strategic activity measure, and the intention to turnover scale. In a naturalistic study that is confirmatory in nature, instrumentation such as psychometric scales may be useful for comparison with other previous studies and for managing the data across multiple cases (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and non-parametric statistics to determine relationships among middle manager strategic activity and the three role theory concepts: role conflict, role ambiguity, and turnover intentions.

The focus of this study was on the roles, expectations, and activities of the academic library middle manager and the tension that is created when these roles, expectations, and activities either conflict or are ambiguous. This study was based on the premise that academic library middle managers have complex, boundary-spanning positions and that the members of their role set send them conflicting expectations. Through qualitative research strategies, such as interviews, observations, and document analysis, several facets of the research questions were addressed. In addition, quantitative data was collected and analyzed to supplement the qualitative data.

3.2 Research questions

This study was designed to address these research questions:

1. What are the role perceptions and expectations of the academic library middle manager? This question addresses the foundation for this study and is addressed using in-depth interviewing techniques, observations, and document analysis. What do the middle managers believe to be the roles and expectations for themselves, and what do the environment (the context) and the members of the middle manager's role set tell us about these roles and expectations? Is there agreement among the members of the middle manager's role set regarding middle manager strategic activity? How do expectations vary among the members of the MMs' role set?

1a. What activities and behaviors do academic library middle managers engage in to fulfill their roles and job duties?

2. Where do the perceived roles and expectations originate? How do academic library employees learn what middle manager means? What words are used in organizational documents to describe what middle managers are expected to do?

3. To what extent do academic library middle managers experience role conflict, role ambiguity, and turnover intentions?

4. How are middle manager role conflict, role ambiguity, or turnover intentions related to middle managers' participation in strategic activities?

3.3 Participant selection

For the purposes of this study, at least three organizational levels must be discernible: senior administrator, middle manager, and middle manager direct report(s). These levels are most reliably obtained at larger, complex institutions. Therefore, the academic library's hierarchy was a key criterion for eligibility in the study. Initial identification of potential sites occurred through the examination of Academic Library Survey (ALS) data (2012). Initial identification was limited to institutions that have Carnegie Basic (2005) classifications of Master's Colleges and Universities or higher, and that have multiple middle managers. A cursory examination of the libraries' websites was undertaken in order to ascertain the hierarchical arrangement and identify likely middle manager positions. In order to investigate the role of the middle manager in this context, a purposive sample of five such eligible academic libraries situated within one state system were invited to participate as sites for the study. Using institutions within one state system allowed for the control of funding source, regional characteristics, and bureaucratic, system-based influences. The researcher contacted the library directors in order to gain entry into the eligible organizations.

To recruit organizations for the study, the director of the libraries identified in the procedure above were contacted by email in order to gain access to the institution. Directors who agreed to participate were asked to affirm that middle managers are employed in their libraries, to supply an organization chart, to provide a list of their middle managers and, once the researcher confirmed the eligibility of the library, were asked to inform their library employees that the library would be participating in this research. The researcher did not inform the director about individuals who did or did not participate in the study.

Once eligible libraries were identified and their participation confirmed, middle managers were recruited from each library. The middle managers were asked to identify their direct reports and senior managers. The senior managers and direct reports were contacted individually and invited to participate. Their participation needed to be gained early in the process so that there was

adequate representation from the three hierarchical levels. The total number of respondents from each organization depended on its size and number of functional departments in the organization.

In a case study, a case may be an individual, a small group, an organization, a community, a nation, or, it may be defined by a role (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In this study, the case is the role of a middle manager in his or her academic library setting (Wolcott, 1973).

3.4   Sampling, or bounding the collection of data

Sampling for qualitative data collection is typically not done in random fashion but through some purposive method; "social processes have a logic and a coherence that random sampling can reduce to uninterpretable sawdust" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, 27). The boundaries and the sampling frame for this study were theory-driven and therefore useful for the study of middle manager strategic activity and role conflict and ambiguity. Within-case sampling parameters were set prior to data collection. Sampling parameters may include activities, processes, events, times, locations, and role partners. Setting parameters is necessary to not only provide focus for the naturalistic researcher, who, once in the environment, may allow herself to record too much (and perhaps irrelevant) information, but also to enable reliable comparison across multiple cases (Miles & Huberman, 1994). For this study, the following were sampled:

- actors/role partners: the middle manager's immediate role set: immediate supervisor (senior manager), immediate subordinates (direct reports), and peers (other middle managers)

- activities: strategic activities of the middle manager

- processes: organizational documents and the interpretation and enaction of their explicit values; expectations and responses to sent expectations, collaborations, projects, participation in strategy formulation, sensegiving, interpreting expectations, perceptions and expectations of role

- events: middle managers' meetings, via their appointment calendars

- times: an equal amount of time was spent interacting with and observing middle managers and their site

- setting/locations: the library. Middle managers were observed in their natural environment,

including their offices, on-site meeting rooms, and any designated functional area (e.g., reference desk). Excluded were extra-library locations and other external actors.

This within-case sampling is nested, in that the middle managers studied are found within departments within libraries within universities within state systems, and there is regular movement up and down that ladder. This sampling is also theoretically driven: informants, activities, processes, events and interactions were chosen based upon the conceptual questions of role theory and middle manager strategic activity rather than by a concern for representativeness. Finally, the sampling is iterative, in that observations, conversations and documents led to new ones that helped clarify patterns, illuminate contrasts or identify exceptions (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Multiple-case sampling adds confidence to findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The exploration of similar and contrasting cases increases the understanding of a single-case finding. Again, the choice of cases is made on conceptual grounds, rather than an interest in generalizing to a larger population. This study focused on the middle managers in three academic libraries within one state system. These academic libraries are similar in that they are each affiliated with a four-year, degree-granting institution with a Carnegie Basic classification of Masters Colleges and Universities or higher and that they have a hierarchical structure that includes middle manager positions. Differences include: the middle managers oversee a variety of functional and cross-departmental operations; the middle managers may or may not have faculty status or hold tenure-track positions; each organization has a unique level of autonomy and clientele that influences its operations and decision-making; each middle manager's role set consists of individuals with unique and varied backgrounds that may influence their expectations of the middle manager role; the middle manager's years of experience may influence their responses to expectations, their experience of role conflict and ambiguity, and their participation in strategic activities.

In deciding how many cases would be included, Miles and Huberman (1994) ask: "how many cases, in what kind of sampling frame, would give us confidence in our analytic generalizations?" (p. 30). They suggest that if the within-case sampling is rich and complex, more than 15 cases becomes unwieldy. As data increases and analysis moves more toward thinner aggregation, survey research might be a better approach. This study sought to include no more than 15 middle managers across the three academic libraries within the same state system. Eleven middle managers positively

responded and took part in the study, producing 11 cases.

Miles and Huberman (1994) recommend being explicit about processes and collecting comparable data across cases (based on concepts or theory) and they caution against sampling too narrowly. The current study focused on the processes related to middle manager strategic activity as defined by Floyd and Wooldridge's (1996) framework, which delineates upward and downward strategic activity, and divergent and integrative strategic activity, and suggests that middle managers are indeed involved in strategy formation and implementation. This study also explored the concept of role conflict and ambiguity among academic library middle managers, who hold boundary-spanning positions that are considered prone to conflict and ambiguity. To avoid sampling too narrowly, the study design included the gathering of data from the focal middle manager and the members of his or her role set, so as to gather information about the role from at least three different perspectives. Sampling multiple middle managers in three academic libraries, this study included outliers, dissenters, and disconfirming or exceptional cases.

Stratified purposeful sampling supports the participant selection described above. According to Sandelowski (2000), stratified purposeful sampling is used to represent combinations of pre-selected variables and is suitable for intensive case-based research. For this study, the case is the role of the middle manager, and it is reasonable to assume that a large, complex organization has multiple hierarchical layers, and that the membership in each layer increases down the hierarchy. That is, there is one university librarian, who directly supervises two or more associate university librarians, who each have one or more middle managers reporting directly to them, and so on. An example of the sample distribution is illustrated in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Example of stratified purposeful sampling.

Library A	Library B	Library C	N=3
1 Senior Mgr	2 Senior Mgrs	3 Senior Mgrs	N=6
2 Mid Mgrs	5 Mid Mgrs	4 Mid Mgrs	N=11
3 Subordinates	8 Subordinates	10 Subordinates	N=21
N=6	N=15	N=17	N=38

3.5 Data collection procedures

The data for this intensive multiple case study come from a variety of sources using a variety of methods in order to achieve data, methodological, and theoretical triangulation. The data come from document analysis, on-site interviews, observation, and participants' responses to questionnaires. Middle managers submitted responses to psychometric scales that measure strategic activity level, role conflict and ambiguity, and turnover intentions. All participants submitted demographic data. The methods used to gather these data are described below.

Initially, organizational documents were reviewed to gain an understanding of the context and to become familiar with basic organizational processes and hierarchy. Documents include the library web site, organizational charts, mission statement, vision statement, strategic plan, and job descriptions of the senior managers, middle managers, and direct reports. Senior managers, middle managers, and subordinates were identified by staffing information and organizational charts submitted by library directors; reasonable efforts were made to gather individual institutional email addresses from the library web sites. Documents were analyzed with the theoretical frameworks as a basis, but also with a focus on common organizational normative concepts: mission, values, culture, and structure. Organizational documents, as indicators of what an organization thinks it is and says it is, convey important cues and clues against which to compare individual employees' perceptions of their own organizational realities. Latent and explicit content indicate the messages that the organization sends to its employees and capture the organization's expectations of the employees in various positions. Mission statements, strategic plans, organization charts and position descriptions are the official organizational documents that were gathered and analyzed. In addition, middle managers' professional documents were gathered and analyzed to learn how middle managers describe their activities and communicate about themselves. These documents included their resumes and their work calendars. All documents were analyzed prior to the semi-structured interviews of the middle managers' role set members.

An on-site visit allowed the researcher to gain familiarity with the physical plant and working conditions. Observational data were used to validate and provide context for the reports of the interviewees. This observation included journaling of activity in the lobbies of several office locations and about the layout and activities observed while visiting the offices for interviews. Any discrepancies were reconciled through follow-ups with interviewees or the organizational contact.

The interviews were semi-structured. Interview questions were created based on the research questions and the theoretical frameworks of role theory and strategic middle manager activity. Senior managers, middle managers, and subordinates were interviewed individually. Due to scheduling constraints, participants were interviewed in no particular order. Each interview was audio-recorded, leaving the researcher with some opportunity for informal observation and note taking. Each interview was transcribed and stored in the researcher's data management system for analysis, which was done in an iterative fashion. Interview text was analyzed and coded based on categories driven by the Taxonomy of Managerial Performances Requirements, role theory, and strategic middle manager activity theoretical frameworks; however, additional categories emerged as the researcher examined the data.

In order to link data types and maximize benefits obtained from numerical and naturalistic information, data collection also included numerical data through questionnaires based on psychometric scales used in previous strategic activity and role conflict and ambiguity research. Following their interviews, middle managers completed a questionnaire consisting of three sections: role conflict and ambiguity, turnover intentions, and strategic activity. Middle managers completed the Middle Management Strategic Activity scale, which is a 16-item scale designed to measure the frequency of four types of strategic behavior. The items employ a five-point scale with anchors of 1 (never) and 5 (frequently). In addition, middle managers completed the Abridged Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity scales, a 14-item scale that utilizes a 7-point Likert scale with anchors of "Definitely not true" to "Extremely true", which measures middle managers' experience of role ambiguity, intra-sender role conflict, and inter-sender role conflict. Finally, middle managers responded to the Intention to Turnover scale from the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire, which consists of three items on a 5-point scale anchored by "Strongly disagree" and "Strongly agree".

Interview questions and psychometric scales are included in the Appendices.

3.6   Instrumentation

This section describes the instruments that were used to collect the quantitative data for this study. All of the measures used in this study have been used in previous research: Middle Manager Strategic Activity; Abridged Role Conflict and Ambiguity Scales; and Intention to Turnover Scale. The questionnaires were administered to the middle managers participating in the research study; questionnaires were administered after document analysis, interviews and site visits. This section

describes the development of each measure as well as any documented support for the measures' psychometric properties. The section is organized based on the three principle constructs that are under investigation:

1. MM strategic activity: the strategic activities and behaviors that middle managers perform or are expected to perform by their senior manager and their direct subordinates.

2. MM role ambiguity and role conflict: MM role ambiguity is the extent to which it is clear to the middle managers what activities and behaviors they should perform; MM role conflict has to do with the potentially competing expectations the members of the middle manager's role set have for the middle manager.

3. MM turnover intentions is the extent to which MMs express an interest in leaving their jobs.

To assess MM strategic activity, the Middle Manager Strategic Activity scale was used. The Middle Manager Strategic Activity scale, developed by Floyd and Wooldridge (1992), is based on a careful review of earlier qualitative middle manager studies, resulting in four categories of strategic activities in which middle managers engage: championing alternatives, facilitating adaptability, synthesizing information, and implementing deliberate strategy. Preliminary items were developed from these categories and then pretested on a small sample of practicing managers who offered feedback. The resulting 16-item scale represents the component factors that measure those four types of strategic behavior. In Floyd and Wooldridge's 1992 study, 259 middle managers indicated on a 5-point Likert-type scale how frequently they perform the activities described in each item. The anchors were 1=never and 5=frequently. The frequency scale is intended to capture the extent to which managers perceive the behaviors to be part of their work activity, rather than to measure the number of times a given activity was performed (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1997). Accompanying instructions clarify that the activities listed in the Strategic Activity scale are not intended to be a comprehensive description of managerial work. Cronbach's alpha for the original study was .91. Overall scores on this ordinal scale indicated the level of middle manager strategic activity and were considered as the combined strategic activities. Scores on the component factors indicated the levels of types of strategic activity. The means of each of the four component factors were analyzed using non-parametric tests (Wooldridge & Floyd, 1990; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992, 1997).

The next set of constructs measured in this study is related to the middle manager's understanding of his or her role in the organization: role conflict and ambiguity. This study measured role conflict and ambiguity using the Abridged Role Conflict and Ambiguity Scales as found in Murphy and Gable (1988), which assess the validity and reliability of Rizzo et al.'s (1970) original 29-item scale and abridged 14-item scale. Rizzo et al. (1970) developed the original role conflict and ambiguity scales based on the conceptual role conflict categories developed by Kahn et al. (1964), which included intra-sender conflict, inter-sender conflict, inter-role conflict, and person-role conflict. Much of the research on role conflict and role ambiguity used these scales; the role conflict scale became the primary measure for this construct (Tubre & Collins, 2000; Van Sell et al., 1981). Role ambiguity, however, had not been as elaborately conceptualized as role conflict (Murphy & Gable, 1988), and few studies had an academic setting. Rizzo et al.'s scale development efforts reduced 29 initial items designed to measure all four types of role conflict and two sources of ambiguity to 14 items representing two conceptually meaningful factors: role conflict (8 items) and role ambiguity (6 items). The theoretical categories of role conflict did not emerge as distinct factorial entities, leading Murphy and Gable to conduct two studies of university administrators designed to re-assess the scale's ability to measure the component factors of role conflict and to reliably measure role ambiguity. After factor analyses, Murphy and Gable obtained a three-factor solution (as did Schwab et al., 1983, in their study of 448 Massachusetts teachers). In their studies of university administrators, they found that Factor I items conceptually reflected role ambiguity; Factor II reflected intra-sender role conflict; and Factor III reflected inter-sender role conflict. They suggest it is not wise to collapse all three factors, as ambiguity and conflict are conceptually different. Factors II and III may be combined as an indicator of role conflict. Individuals who score high on Factor I perceive low levels of ambiguity (because the items are positively-worded).

The Abridged Role Conflict and Ambiguity Scales are a 14-item scale whose component factors measure role ambiguity, role conflict (intra-sender) and role conflict (inter-sender). Items are rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from "Definitely Not True" to "Extremely True." In Gable and Murphy's study, Cronbach's alpha for role ambiguity is .81; for Factor II Cronbach's alpha is .76; for Factor III Cronbach's alpha is .66. Cronbach's alpha for Factors II and III combined is .81.

The construct middle manager turnover intentions was measured using the Intention to Turnover scale from the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire (Cammann et al., 1983). Re-

spondents indicated the extent to which they agree with three items on a 5-point scale anchored by 1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree. Subsequent studies using this measure have indicated satisfactory internal reliability with Cronbach's alphas ranging from .76 to .92 (Madden, 2013; Khatri et al., 2001; Harris et al., 2005; Ali & Baloch, 2009).

3.7 Data capture protocol

Two critical concerns addressed here are what data were captured and how they were recorded. In order to achieve data triangulation, three sources of data were captured: documents, observations, and interviews. The documents were gathered prior to the site visits, when the interviews and observations took place. The researcher spent sufficient time at each site to observe workspaces and to conduct interviews with each of the participants, approximately 20 hours per case. The middle manager interviews were about twice as long as the interviews with the other participants. There was no attempt to hold the interviews in a particular sequence (e.g., interview the middle manager before interviewing the other members of the middle manager's role set).

Observations. The researcher visited the sites and noted general working conditions, placement of offices, staff traffic patterns and interactions with middle managers. Each middle manager workspace was observed during a different 2-hour period each day for 5 consecutive workdays. These observations were recorded using a form designed to capture descriptive notes (pictures of scenes, reconstruction of dialog, physical setting, accounts of particular events, and activities), reflective notes (personal thoughts such as speculation, feelings, problems, ideas, hunches, impressions, and prejudices), and demographic information (time, place, date) (Creswell, 2007).

Interviews. Interviews with middle managers, senior managers, and direct reports were interspersed throughout the observation days. The interviews were semi-structured, with open-ended questions. The researcher used a form with the interview questions, probes, space for recording the interviewer's comments, and space for reflective notes. The interviews were audio-recorded and were transcribed later for coding and analysis. Interview questions are located in the Appendix.

Documents. Pertinent documents such as mission statements, strategic plans, organizational charts, job descriptions, and curricula vita are primary documents that were gathered from the organization and the middle managers and analyzed prior to the site visits. Middle managers submitted their previous 3-month work calendars for analysis prior to the site visits; calendar activities were reviewed with the middle managers during the on-site interviews and subjected to

further coding and analysis after these reviews. The protocol for collecting these documents included identifying last dates of revision or review and responsible party, if possible. The researcher was looking for text that refers to middle manager positions, responsibilities, activities and behaviors, and collaboration partners.

Site visit schedule:

RuralULibrary site visit occurred June 1 - June 12, 2015; middle manager calendars March, April, and May 2015

DowntownULibrary site visit occurred June 23 - July 8, 2015; middle manager calendars March, April, and May 2015

UrbanULibrary site visit occurred November 16 November 20, 2015; middle manager calendar August, September and October 2015

3.8 Data management

The storage and retrieval system for the qualitative data followed general principles of consistent formatting, ample cross-referrals, sophisticated indexing/coding structure, abstracting with linkages to the source material, and pagination as a locator device.

What was stored, retrieved from, and retained:

1. raw material: field notes, recordings, site documents

2. partially processed data: write-ups, transcriptions; initial and subsequent versions

3. coded data: write-ups with codes attached

4. coding scheme or thesaurus

5. memos, the researcher's reflections

6. search and retrieval records; links made among segments

7. data displays: matrices or networks

8. analysis episodes: documentation of steps followed to assemble displays and write analytic text

9. report text: successive drafts

10. general chronological log of data collection and analysis

11. index of all the above material (adapted from (Miles & Huberman, 1994, 46))

Handwritten field notes, audio recordings, and documents were converted to analyzable text, and then reduced, displayed, and used to draw and verify conclusions (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Computer software was employed to transcribe, store, code and analyze data. Microsoft Excel, Apple Numbers, and TAMSAnalyzer Software, a native Macintosh application for coding and extracting ethnographic data, were used to:

1. write up and transcribe field notes

2. correct, extend, or revise field notes

3. code: attach key words or tags to segments of text to permit later retrieval

4. store text in an organized database

5. locate relevant segments of text and make them available for inspection

6. connect relevant data segments with each other, forming categories, clusters or networks of information (data linking)

7. write reflective commentaries on some aspect of the data, as a basis for deeper analysis (memoing)

8. place selected or reduced data in a condensed, organized format, such as a matrix or network, for inspection (data display)

9. draw conclusions and verify interpretations or confirm findings

10. develop systematic, conceptually coherent explanations of findings (theory building and confirmation)

11. create diagrams that depict findings or theories (graphic mapping)

12. prepare interim and final reports (based on the list in (Miles & Huberman, 1994, 44))

3.9 Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted in interaction with data collection, data interpretation and narrative reporting writing (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The analysis is based on the concepts of data reduction and data interpretation: reducing the data to patterns, categories or themes, and then interpreting the data using a scheme to present a consolidated picture. Analytic practices included:

- Affixing codes to a set of field notes drawn from observations or interviews
- Noting reflections or other remarks in the margins
- Sorting and sifting through these materials to identify similar phrases, relationships between variables, patterns, themes, distinct differences between subgroups, and common sequences
- Isolating these patterns and processes, commonalities and differences, and taking them out to the field in the next wave of data collection
- Gradually elaborating a small set of generalizations that cover the consistencies discerned in the database
- Confronting those generalizations with a formalized body of knowledge in the form of constructs or theories (Miles & Huberman, 1994, 9).

Yin (1981) suggests searching for patterns in case study data by comparing results with patterns predicted from theory or the literature. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest starting by building a conceptual framework, which explains, in graphical or narrative form, the key factors, constructs or variables and the relationships among them. "Frameworks can be rudimentary or elaborate, theory-driven or commonsensical, descriptive or causal" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, 18). Also, as data collection proceeds, the frameworks may change and become more precise.

In order to code the data collected, a provisional start list of codes, based on the conceptual framework, research questions and problem areas was employed in this study (See Table 3.2.) This provisional list was a starting point; the codes were subject to revision and adaption once the researcher was in the field gathering data and following leads.

Also based on the conceptual framework, a pre-structured case outline was developed to focus and streamline data collection and reporting. In a study where the conceptual framework is precise, the research questions are explicit, and the researcher has a clear sense of the data that need to be collected, Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest a way to focus and streamline data collection, especially in multiple case studies where comparability across cases is critical. "The pre-structured

Table 3.2: Start List of Codes.

Role Conflict
RC: Inter-sender
RC: Intra-sender
RC: Person-role
RC: Inter-role
Role Ambiguity
Role Set
RS: middle manager
RS: direct report
RS: senior manager
RS: other
Turnover Intentions
Strategic Activity
ST: championing alternatives
ST: synthesizing information
ST: facilitating adaptability
ST: implementing deliberate strategy
Traditional Activities
TA: planning
TA: organizing
TA: guiding
TA: training
TA: representing the organization
TA: administrative and paperwork
TA: coordinating work of others
TA: decisionmaking
TA: staffing
Sensegiving Activities
Queries
QU: surprises
QU: puzzles

case begins with a case outline developed before any data are collected. . . . The outline is, in effect, a shell for the data to come" (p. 84). "[T]he field-worker, knowing what the case has to look like, collects the data needed to fill the shell. Specific data displays (matrices, organization charts, etc.) are designed in advance" (p. 84). Careful planning for data collection was required; a sequential approach to data collection would potentially focus on different research questions during successive site visits, for example. In a pre-structured case, the analysis proceeds thusly: outline, field notes, coding, display data, conclusions, report, with iterations from conclusions to field notes and from report to field notes until done. Weaknesses of this procedure include coding from scribbled field notes and a tendency to draw early conclusions. In order to overcome these weaknesses, Miles and Huberman suggest that the researcher should be familiar with the setting being studied, sampling from a range of informants and settings, triangulating data collection methods, theories and respondents, and critiques from skeptical colleagues. The initial outline:

Beginning note: case methods and data

1. Library A

    (a) University Overview

    (b) Structure; departments; organization chart

    (c) Mission; strategy

    (d) Job descriptions

2. Library A Senior manager(s)

    (a) Title; department; MM direct reports

    (b) MM expectations

    (c) Interactions with MMs

    (d) Tenure; demographics

3. Library A Middle manager(s)

    (a) Senior manager; title; department

    (b) Middle manager title; department

(c) Direct reports: position titles

(d) Activities

(e) Expectations

(f) Experience of role conflict and ambiguity

(g) Turnover intentions

(h) Questionnaire results

(i) Tenure; demographics

4. Library A Direct report(s)

(a) Title; department; MM title

(b) MM expectations

(c) Interactions with MMs

(d) Tenure; demographics

And so on for each library.

The conceptual frameworks guiding this study are role conflict and ambiguity, middle manager strategic activity, and turnover intentions. Role conflict and ambiguity constructs indicate that differing expectations among the members of the focal person's (in this study the middle manager's) role set may impact the focal person negatively. According to the literature, middle managers hold boundary-spanning positions that cause them to experience role ambiguity, or a lack of clarity about their responsibilities and activities in the organization. Middle managers with greater strategic activity levels experience higher levels of role conflict. Role conflict and ambiguity is related to turnover intentions. None of these concepts have been investigated among middle managers in academic library settings. This study attempted to provide an understanding of how middle manager is defined in the academic library context, based upon the expectations of the middle manager's role set and the organizational setting. In addition, the study was designed to help discover if the members of the middle manager's role set have competing expectations and if so, how they impact the middle manager's experience of role conflict and ambiguity, and turnover intentions. Finally, this study explored the extent of the academic library middle manager's involvement in

strategic activities, and if that activity level impacts the middle manager's experience of role conflict, ambiguity, and turnover intentions.

Data matrices were used to display within-case and cross-case analysis. Examples follow in Tables 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, and 3.6.

Table 3.3: Library A

Informant	MM expectations (involvement in strategy)	Years of experience	Nature of interactions	MM expectations (general)
MM1 a,+ [a]	STs			TAs, SAs
MM2 b				
MM3 a				
SM1 a				
SM2 b				
DR1 +				
DR2 #				
DR3 +				
DR4 +				
DR5 #				
DR6 #				

[a]+=Reference, #=Special collections,
 a=Public services, b=Technical services

Table 3.4: Middle manager activities

Data Source	Lib A	Lib B	Lib C
Job Desc			
Strategic Plan			
DRs			
SMs			
MMs			
Observations			
No. of employees			
No. of students			
Status			

Data triangulation is also important to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). Data from the questionnaires were analyzed through non-parametric statistics and

Table 3.5: Library A: Middle manager role conflict, ambiguity, and turnover intentions

Middle manager	Role conflict (inter-sender, intra-sender, etc.)	Role conflict scale result	Ambiguity	Ambiguity scale result	Turnover Intentions	Turnover Intentions scale result
MM1	type and no. of code instances	scale indicator				
MM2						

Table 3.6: Expectations of the Role Set

Middle manager	Activities (reported)	Activities (observed)	SM expectations	DR expectations	Job description	Other documents
MM1						
MM2						

comparisons to external norms. Data from organizational documents were analyzed through the dialogic interplay between the observer and the documents, using the lens of the Taxonomy of Managerial Performance Requirements, the strategic activity and the role theory frameworks. Data from interviews and observation were included in this triangulated analysis.

3.10   Ethical considerations

In any study, it is important to protect the rights of the participants. In ethnographic-type studies, it is incumbent upon the researcher to realize that participant observation is intrusive and that sensitive information is frequently revealed; precautions must be taken to protect the rights, needs, values and desires of the informants. Because this study was conducted within a small world â 3 academic libraries situated in four-year, degree-granting institutions â safeguards were employed to protect the informants' rights.

Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest the following questions for agreement with study participants:

1. How much time and effort will be involved?

2. What kind of data collection is involved (e.g., observation, interviewing, journal writing, life histories)?

3. Is participation voluntary?

4. Who will design and steer the study?

5. Will material from participants be treated confidentially?

6. Will participants' anonymity be maintained?

7. Who will produce descriptive and explanatory products?

8. Will participants review and critique interim and final products?

9. What benefits will accrue to participants â both informants and researchers? (p. 48)

A particular concern in this study is anonymity: readers of the final report who are organization members may be able to identify informants due to their position descriptions or other organizational features. Individuals not assured of anonymity may provide biased data in order to protect some interest.

To address these issues, the following safeguards were employed:

1. The research objectives were articulated verbally and in writing so that they were clearly understood by the informants

2. Written permission to proceed with the study was received by the informants

3. Participation was voluntary

4. A research proposal was submitted to and approved by the UNC Institutional Review Board

5. The informants were informed of all data collection devices and activities

6. The researcher produced the products of the study.

CHAPTER 4

Results

Collected data were reduced in a variety of ways and then analyzed as indicated in the methodology section. In order to present a cohesive picture of the libraries and the organizational actors who took part in the study, two overviews are presented: first of the three library sites and their organizational structure, culture and mission; and then of the 11 middle managers, the six senior managers, and 25 direct reports. These overviews include summaries of the participants' responses to questions about their expectations of the middle manager role, the articulation of middle manager responsibilities in organizational documents, and an overall snapshot of the organizational actors in these cases. Following these overviews, the research questions which form the focus of this study are addressed. Finally, cross-case analyses are presented to illuminate themes, similarities, and contrasts among the cases. Documents and interviews were coded for analysis using the dimensions from the Taxonomy of Managerial Performance Job (Borman & Brush, 1993). Three additional codes were added to the Taxonomy dimensions because they were needed in order to describe middle manager activities that were discovered throughout the empirical research process. The three added codes are:

"Collaborating": refers to collaboration across units in the library or with extra-library organizations. This is distinct from *Coordinating subordinates*, which is a managerial function pertaining to the manager's duties within their unit/department.

"Filling in": refers to filling in for direct reports; fulfilling duties for vacant positions; or substituting in temporary or sudden situations.

"Modeling behavior": a sensegiving activity (Smith et al., 2010). Includes role modeling and leading by example.

The complete list of managerial activity codes used to analyze study data (documents, interviews, calendar entries and observations) is displayed below and includes the 18 Borman and Brush Taxonomy dimensions plus the researcher-generated codes. For ease of identification throughout

this document, the 18 Taxonomy dimensions are presented in italics (e.g., *Planning and organizing*), and the researcher-added codes are presented in double-quotes (e.g., "collaborating"). The complete Taxonomy with code definitions can be found in the Appendices.

The Taxonomy of Managerial Performance Dimension Names (Borman & Brush, 1993):

1. *Planning and organizing*
2. *Guiding, directing, and motivating subordinates and providing feedback*
3. *Training, coaching, and developing subordinates*
4. *Communicating effectively and keeping others informed*
5. *Representing the organization to customers and the public*
6. *Technical proficiency*
7. *Administration and paperwork*
8. *Maintaining good working relationships*
9. *Coordinating subordinates and others resources to get the job done*
10. *Decision making/problem solving*
11. *Staffing*
12. *Persisting to reach goals*
13. *Handling crises and stress*
14. *Organizational commitment*
15. *Monitoring and controlling resources*
16. *Delegating*
17. *Selling/influencing*
18. *Collecting and interpreting data*
19. "Collaborating"
20. "Modeling behavior"
21. "Filling in"

4.1 Overviews

4.1.1 Overview of Libraries

Based on an examination of the available organizational documents, an overview of DowntownULibrary's, UrbanULibrary's, and RuralULibrary's relevant organizational factors is given below. This section includes information about the parent organization, the library's organizational structure, its mission and strategy, information about job descriptions, and overall expectations of the middle manager position.

DowntownU

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DowntownU is a public, four-year doctoral degree-granting institution. With a Carnegie Classification of Research/Doctoral Universities, enrollment for the 2015-16 academic year was over 20,000. DowntownULibrary had total staff of more than 200 who provide collections and services; 56 employees were designated as librarians and other professional staff in the 2012 Academic Library Survey (ALS).

DowntownULibrary's staff include library faculty, who participate in shared governance and most of whom hold tenure-track positions, and classified staff who are subject to the state's human resources act. With few exceptions, library faculty are tenure-eligible. Data collection took place June-July 2015.

The organizational structure of DowntownULibrary consists of four functional divisions with an assistant director for each: special collections, public services, technical services and IT, and collections and scholarly communication. Seven of the 13 department heads identified as middle managers by the library director agreed to participate in the study. These seven middle managers came from across the four divisions of DowntownULibrary; therefore, at least one role set from each division participated, as did all of DowntownULibrary's assistant directors. Four of the middle manager participants manage essentially homogeneous functional areas (e.g., circulation and ILL, research and instruction); the remaining three oversee heterogeneous departments (e.g., a branch library, university records and archives).

DowntownULibrary's mission [1] states that it is the intellectual heart of DowntownU. It serves campus, distance education, and regional communities and supports the University's contributions to the worldwide research community. The library connects people to information through robust collections, superior services and people-friendly spaces. DowntownULibrary's over-arching strategic goals are aligned with DowntownU's strategic goals, and each department articulates objectives to achieve these goals annually.

When available or applicable, job descriptions and governance by-laws, policies and procedures were examined to learn about the explicit expectations of middle manager positions. Job descriptions for DowntownULibrary were requested and many were received, but they were deemed too dated

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[1]All mission, vision and strategic plan statements are paraphrases and/or have been anonymized as much as is possible

and inconsistent to be useful in this study. The section of DowntownULibrary's primary governance document that addresses department head (i.e., middle manager) responsibilities lists duties that were coded with the Taxonomy dimensions found in Table 4.1.

Planning & Organizing	Maintaining Relationships
Guiding, Directing & Motivating	Coordinating
Training, Coaching & Developing	Staffing
Communicating Effectively	Monitoring & Controlling
Administration & Paperwork	Delegating

Table 4.1: DowntownULibrary Department Head Responsibilities

UrbanU

UrbanU is a public, four-year degree-granting institution. UrbanU has the Carnegie Classification of Master's Colleges and Universities (larger programs), and its enrollment for the 2015-16 academic year was just over 12,000 students. UrbanULibrary has a total staff of 50, 21 of whom were classified as librarians and other professional staff in the ALS.

UrbanULibrary's staff include library faculty who participate in shared governance but who are not eligible for tenure and classified staff who are subject to the state's human resources act.

The organizational structure of UrbanULibrary consists of functional divisions with five assistant directors who oversee the traditional library areas: access services, instruction, research and learning, technical and collection management, and IT and systems. Seven additional staff report directly to the library director, who identified six middle managers; only one agreed to participate in the study. This was the only library site where classified staff members were identified as middle managers. Data was collected November 2015.

UrbanULibrary supports the mission of the University by providing information resources and learner-centered services and by cultivating a rich physical and virtual environment dedicated to the open exchange of ideas and an information-literate community. UrbanULibrary's vision is to inspire, nurture and satisfy intellectual and cultural curiosity. Its core values are learning, service, access, integrity and diversity. UrbanULibrary's strategic plan revolves around eight key action areas and includes references to the University's goals, ALA's strategic plan, and its accrediting agencies.

In UrbanULibrary, beyond job descriptions and annual evaluations, there is no organizational document that articulates expectations for staff positions. There are governance documents for

library faculty roles and responsibilities, but these do not apply to the middle manager participant from UrbanULibrary. The job description of the middle manager was made available and was examined for the study. This job description is new and up-to-date, and had evolved, with the senior manager's input, during the MM's three-year tenure at UrbanULibrary.

RuralU

RuralU is a public, four-year degree-granting institution. This third university is the smallest studied; it has the Carnegie Classification of Master's Colleges and Universities (larger programs) and an enrollment of approximately 10,000 students, with total staff of 55, 22 of whom were classified as librarians and other professional staff in the ALS.

RuralULibrary's staff include library faculty who participate in shared governance and are eligible for tenure and classified staff who are subject to the state's human resources act. One librarian position is fixed-term. At the time of data collection (June 2015), RuralULibrary had an interim director and all of the middle managers reported directly to the assistant director, who was interviewed as the senior manager (SM) for this study. Employees were unsure if this reporting line would change with the new permanent dean's administration. The MMs have direct access to the library director themselves and are a part of the library's leadership team. The organizational structure of RuralULibrary consists of functional divisions with a department head for each. All of these middle managers participated in the study.

RuralULibrary's mission statement (2011) states that in support of the University's educational mission, RuralULibrary provides intellectual content, and services related to its discovery and use, for the learning, teaching, and research activities of the University's students, faculty, and staff. By supporting the acquisition of learning and the production of knowledge and scholarship, RuralULibrary intends to inspire the individual and the intellect, fostering professional, personal and social growth.

RuralULibrary's strategic plan includes five strategic directions. Each strategic direction has 2-7 goals, with specific departments listed for each goal. With the exception of strategic direction 5, there were multiple departments listed for each goal, explicitly indicating collaboration partnerships among departments in order to accomplish the goals. Strategic direction 5 is primarily an administrative one, and the dean's office was indicated as the responsible party.

Many of the job descriptions requested from RuralULibrary were current and, for the most

part, accurate. The job descriptions were essentially the job advertisements that were published to invite applicants. The researcher was able to examine these documents and ask study participants if they accurately articulate the MMs' job responsibilities. Overall, RuralULibrary's MMs reported that the job descriptions were accurate but that there were missing elements (e.g., "filling in" and *Representing the Organization*) or that they desired greater clarity regarding specific responsibilities. Job descriptions are included in the analysis below.

An appendix in RuralULibrary's primary governance document entitled "Department Heads Roles and Responsibilities" articulates middle managers' duties. This document was originally organized by these headings: strategic planning, management, budget, leadership, and personnel, and it was coded to indicate the expectations found in Table 4.2.

Planning & Organizing	*Maintaining Relationships*
Guiding, Directing & Motivating	*Coordinating*
Training, Coaching & Developing	*Staffing*
Communicating	*Organizational Commitment*
Representing the Organization	*Monitoring & Controlling*
Technical Proficiency	*Delegating*
Administration & Paperwork	*Collecting & Interpreting Data*

Table 4.2: RuralULibrary Department Head Responsibilities

A comparison of the document-based expectations of middle managers at DowntownULibrary and at RuralULibrary is in Table 4.3, indicating which of the 21 dimensions are articulated in the department heads sections of each organization's governing document. Note that there was no such document for the middle manager participant at UrbanULibrary. As shown in the table, RuralULibrary middle managers have a few more expectations than those at DowntownULibrary, but there is a great deal in common between the two organizations.

Table 4.4 describes the stratified purposeful sampling used in this study, giving a snapshot of the participants' organizational roles. While there was no attempt to achieve a random sample, it was important to have a complete role set for each middle manager who participated. A complete role set consists of one middle manager, one senior manager, and at least one direct report. The stratified purposeful sampling table also indicates the level of participation of each library site. For example, RuralULibrary's participation level in this study was very high: all of their middle managers participated, and they are all supervised by the same senior manager. Similarly, all of

Table 4.3: Comparison of expectations of department heads at DowntownULibrary and RuralULibrary

Taxonomy Dimension	DowntownU	RuralU
Planning & Organizing	●	●
Guiding, Directing & Motivating	●	●
Training, Coaching & Developing	●	●
Communicating	●	●
Representing the Organization		●
Technical Proficiency		●
Administration & Paperwork	●	●
Maintaining Relationships	●	●
Coordinating	●	●
Decision Making		
Staffing	●	●
Persisting		
Handling Crises		
Organizational Commitment		●
Monitoring & Controlling	●	●
Delegating	●	●
Selling & Influencing		
Collecting & Interpreting Data		●
"collaborating"		
"modeling behavior"		
"filling in"		

the eligible senior managers in DowntownULibrary participated, and more than half of their middle managers did as well. Comparatively, UrbanULibrary's participation was very low.

Table 4.4: Stratified purposeful sampling used in this study.

Role set type	DowntownU	UrbanU	RuralU	Totals by type
Senior managers	4	1	1	N=6
Middle managers	7	1	3	N=11
Direct reports	14	2	8	N=24
Totals by site	N=25	N=4	N=12	N=41

4.1.2 Overview of Middle Managers

Eleven academic library middle managers from three libraries took part in this study; all but one of them hold tenure-track faculty positions. The MMs work in a variety of functional areas, including special collections (archives and records management, rare books and manuscripts), public services (research and instruction, access services, a campus branch library), and technical services (cataloging, collection development, systems, digital projects). Four MMs oversee multiple functional areas; the other MMs oversee single functional areas, but are exposed to a variety of stakeholders with whom they collaborate frequently and who also send them expectations.

The MMs' years of experience range from a brief four months to 15.25 years (3.4 years avg., 1.75 years median). Seven of them are "home-grown", meaning they worked in their current library as a librarian prior to acquiring a middle manager position. As a group, these middle managers supervise the work of 27 salaried, faculty librarians and 25 hourly, classified employees; of these 52 direct reports, nine are themselves supervisors. Four of the MMs supervise both salaried and hourly employees: two heads of research and instruction, the branch library manager, and the head of rare books and manuscripts. All 11 MMs who took part in the study report directly to assistant directors. Table 4.5 below gives a snapshot of the middle managers' functional areas, their direct reports and their tenure in their current positions.

4.1.3 Overview of Senior Managers

Six senior managers, all of whom are assistant library directors in the three library sites, took part in the study. All four assistant directors from DowntownULibrary participated; the assistant director at RuralULibrary supervises all of the MMs there; and only one of five assistant directors at

Table 4.5: Brief descriptions of MM participants

Code	Functional Area(s)	Number of DRs inter- viewed	Total Num- ber of DRs	MM Experi- ence (in months)
DowntownU-MM1	Collection Development	1	2	3
DowntownU-MM2	Access Services	3	3	21
DowntownU-MM3	Research and Instruction	2	10	21
DowntownU-MM4	Special Collections Cataloging	2	5	90
DowntownU-MM5	Archives & Records	2	3	12
DowntownU-MM6	Manuscripts & Rare Books	1	5	27
DowntownU-MM7	Performing Arts Branch	3	4	183
UrbanU-MM1	Circulation	2	2	36
RuralU-MM1	Research and Instruction	5	9	12
RuralU-MM2	Access/IT/Digital	2	3	96
RuralU-MM3	CollDev/Acq/Cataloging	1	3	4

UrbanULibrary participated in the study. All of the major functional areas of academic libraries are represented among these senior managers. The SMs are designated as follows:

- DowntownU-SM1 supervises DowntownU-MM2, DowntownU-MM3, and DowntownU-MM7
- DowntownU-SM2 supervises DowntownU-MM1
- DowntownU-SM3 supervises DowntownU-MM4
- DowntownU-SM4 supervises DowntownU-MM5 and DowntownU-MM6
- UrbanU-SM supervises UrbanU-MM1
- RuralU-SM supervises RuralU-MM1, RuralU-MM2, and RuralU-MM3

The SMs' tenure at their current libraries range from seven to 25 years (14 years avg.), and their overall experience in librarianship averages 22 years (range = 12-35 years). Five of the six SMs had worked as librarians and middle managers in their current libraries prior to taking on assistant director roles. All have bachelor's degrees, hold the MLIS, and have earned one additional degree (including one who is ABD).

4.1.4 Overview of Direct Reports

Twenty-four employees who report directly to the middle manager participants took part in the study: 14 from DowntownULibrary, two from UrbanULibrary, and eight from RuralULibrary. Like

their middle managers, they represent several functional areas of libraries: collection development; ILL and circulation; reference and instruction; cataloging and metadata; digital projects; university archives and records management; manuscripts and rare books; and a branch library. Nine are tenure-track library faculty, two are fixed-term faculty, and 13 are classified employees; four are unit supervisors themselves. They have an average of 9.6 years of experience in their current libraries (range = 8 months to 35 years), and 14 years average in librarianship (range = 8 months to 35 years). Twenty-three of the DRs have a bachelor's degree, 14 hold the MLIS and two DRs are currently enrolled in a library science graduate program. Ten DRs have an additional masters degree and two hold doctorates.

4.2 Research Questions

In this section, the data collected relevant to each research question are presented.

4.2.1 Research Question 1

What are the role perceptions and expectations of the academic library middle manager? Each participant was asked to articulate their expectations of the middle manager role. The verbal responses were transcribed, coded based on the 18 dimensions of the Taxonomy of Managerial Requirements plus the three researcher-created codes "collaborating", "filling in" and "modeling behavior", and then aggregated. They are presented here organized by role set member type, followed by the themes that emerged as factors related to the expectations.

In their interviews, the 11 MMs were asked what behaviors are expected of them in their roles as middle managers in their organizations. As shown in Figure 4.1, the coded expectation that appeared most often was the Taxonomy dimension *Communicating Effectively* (9 out of 11 MMs expressed it). The next most frequent expectations, expressed by more than 50% of the middle managers, were *Guiding, Directing & Motivating* (6/11) and *Coordinating Subordinates* (6/11). *Planning & Organizing* (4/11), *Technical Proficiency* (5/11), and "modeling behavior" (4/11) were expressed by fewer than 50% of the middle managers. The two key dimensions that appeared more often among the middle managers but not among the entire group were *Planning & Organizing* and "modeling behavior". As an indicator of the diversity of perceptions of their role, ten additional Taxonomy dimensions were identified as expectations by as few as one to three MMs; *Maintaining Relationships*, "collaborating" and "filling in" were each articulated by two of the MMs.

There was no universally articulated expectation of middle managers expressed by the six
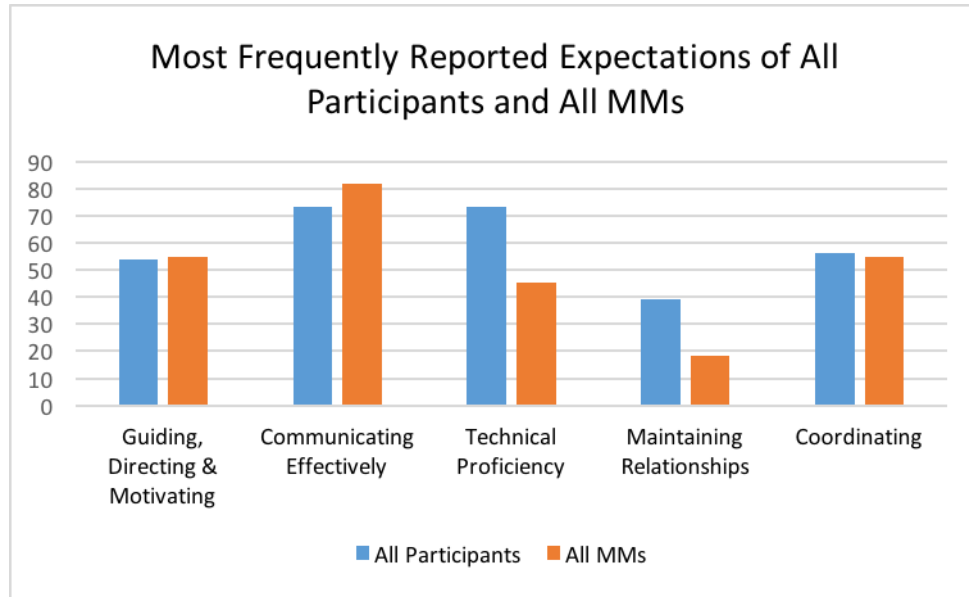
Figure 4.1: Frequently expressed expectations of all participants and all MMs, in percentages

senior managers. The expectations that were expressed most frequently by SMs were *Technical Proficiency* and *Coordinating Subordinates* (4/6), and *Communicating Effectively* (3/6). Eight additional expectations were expressed by one to two SMs. Several of the SMs explained that their expectations of middle managers vary based on the MM's level of experience: more mentoring is required for newer middle managers, and new MMs must learn by doing and seeking out additional training. Regarding *Technical Proficiency*, the SMs indicated that this expectation varies depending upon the nature of the work of the unit the MM supervises.

The 24 DRs expressed a broad range of expectations of their middle managers; the Taxonomy dimensions that were expressed by 50% or more of the DRs are *Technical Proficiency* (20 out of 24 DRs), *Communicating Effectively* (17/24), *Guiding, Directing & Motivating* (13/24), *Coordinating subordinates* (13/24), and *Maintaining Relationships* (12/24). Interestingly, none of the DRs identified *Staffing* or *Delegating* as an expectation, even though both of these dimensions were found in the department heads responsibilities of both DowntownULibrary and RuralULibrary. This result may indicate a lack of familiarity with these documents. There was some variation in response based on the respondents' roles (see Figure 4.2): senior managers and direct reports expressed *Technical Proficiency* more frequently than middle managers, 45% of whom expressed it. Nine out of 11, or 82% of MMs and 71% of DRs, expressed *Communicating Effectively* as an expectation, while only half

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of the SMs did. Two dimensions, *Guiding, Directing & Motivating* and *Coordinating Subordinates* were expressed by 54% of the DRs, 67% of the SMs, and 54% of the MMs. Only one SM expressed *Maintaining Relationships* as an expectation.
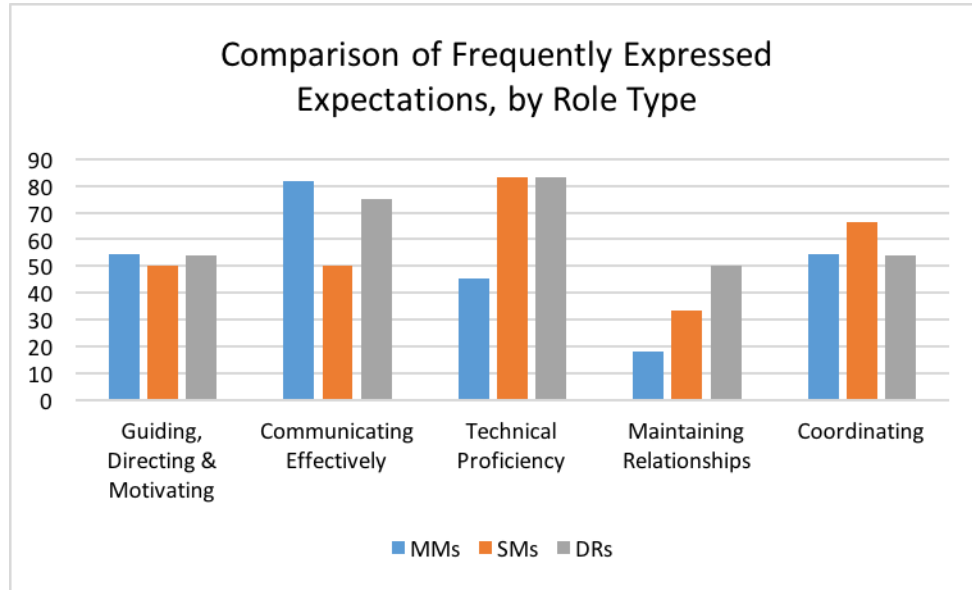
Figure 4.2: Frequently expressed expectations by role type, in percentages

Although there was not a universally expressed expectation of the middle manager role among the study participants, more than half of these role set members were in agreement about these expectations of the middle manager role, also reported in Figure 4.3:

- *Communicating Effectively* (30/41, or 73% of participants)
- *Technical Proficiency* (30/41; 73%)
- *Coordinating Subordinates* (23/41; 56%)
- *Guiding, Directing & Motivating* subordinates (22/41; 54%)

One indicator of congruity of expectations among the role set members is the degree to which they expressed the same (as coded) expectations. If the middle manager's role set members have incongruous expectations of the middle manager role, the middle manager is more likely to experience role ambiguity and/or role conflict. To discover the extent of congruity, the expectations of each middle manager's role set were examined via Venn diagram to determine the degree to which the expectations overlapped. In all library sites, *Communicating Effectively* and *Technical Proficiency* had the highest degree of overlap among all participants.
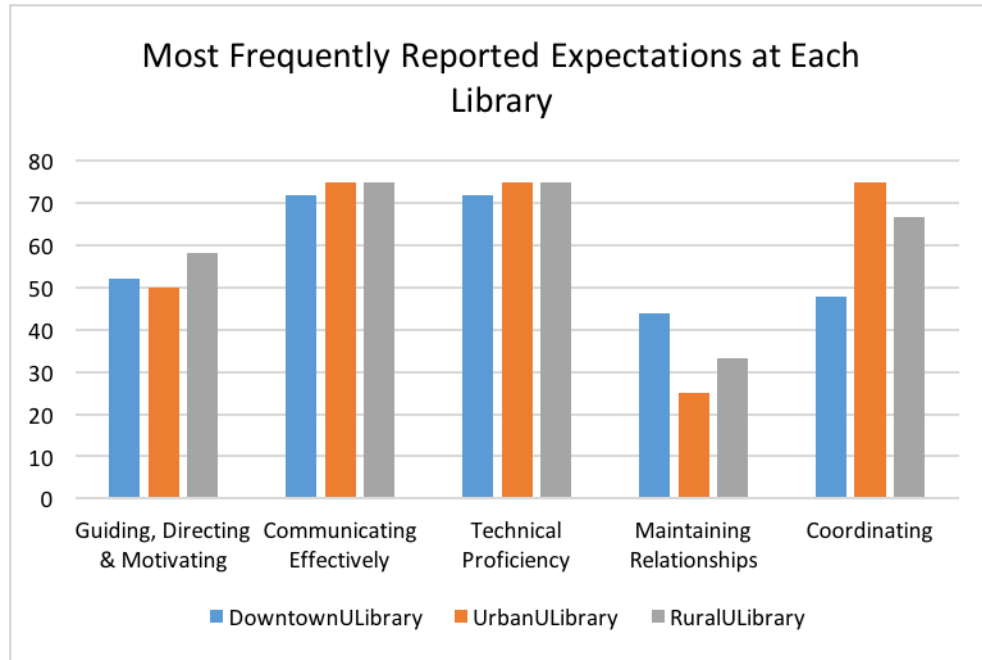
Figure 4.3: Frequently expressed expectations of all participants, by library and in percentages

Another indicator that may be useful is a count of the number of expectations being sent to the MM by their role set. Out of 21 dimensions (18 Taxonomy dimensions and three researcher-defined additions), the range of role set member expectations at each library are presented in Table 4.6.

Library	Number of expectations
DowntownULibrary	8-12
UrbanULibrary	13
RuralULibrary	9-15

Table 4.6: Range of number of expectations sent to middle managers from their role set members

At the low end, the middle manager's role set has eight different expectations of the middle manager role. This means that among the MM, their SM and their DRs, there is a total of eight Taxonomy dimensions represented among their expectations. The high end, representing an even more diverse range of expectations, was 15, found in one role set in RuralULibrary. This count represents the volume of expectations sent to the middle manager, not necessarily incongruity, as there may be significant overlap among the expectations despite the larger number of expectations. This metric might indicate, however, the diversity of the meaning of the middle management role

across the library sites. For example, it is notable that the middle manager from UrbanULibrary, who is a classified staff member, has 13 expectations sent from a rather small role set of four members.

Generally speaking, then, RuralULibrary MMs are sent more expectations from their role set members than those in DowntownULibrary, with those in UrbanULibrary falling between the other two. All of the participants from RuralULibrary are library faculty. This count supports the idea that library faculty expressed a higher number of expectations than other types of employees.

One way to examine the consensus among the middle manager's role set members is to look at the ratio of the number of universal expectations to the overall number of expectations sent to the middle manager by his or her role set members:

y = number of Taxonomy dimensions expressed by every member of the middle manager's role set (representing universal overlap of expectations and complete congruity)

x = total number of Taxonomy dimensions (out of 21) expressed by any of the middle manager's role set members, capturing the summative spread.

y:x represents the consensus or overlap ratio. The consensus or overlap ratio for each middle manager is shown in Figure 4.4.
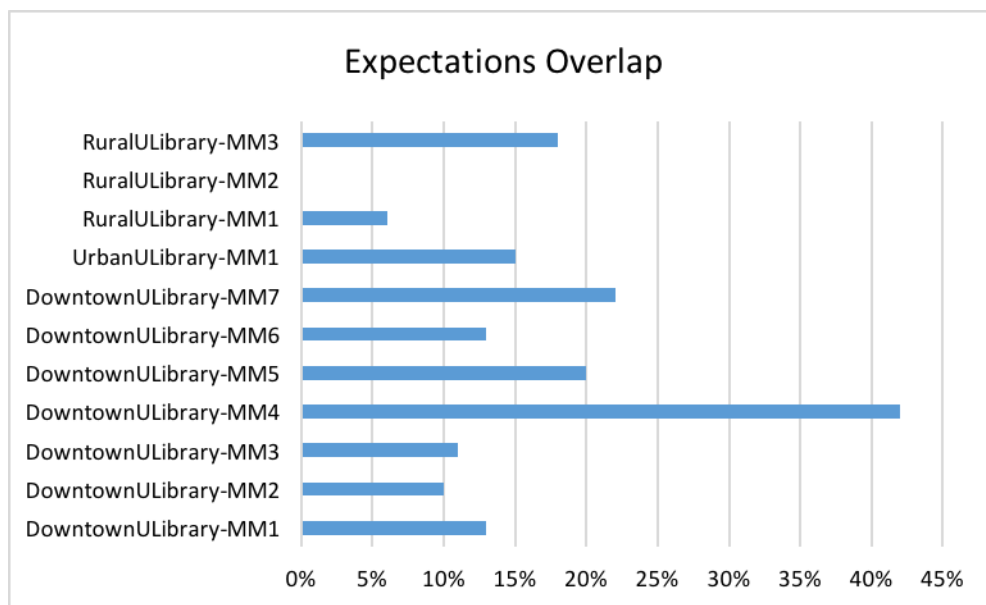
Figure 4.4: Expectations consensus ratio for each middle manager role set

Office locations, organizational structure, employee status, and actor interactions may have some influence on role set members' expectations.

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The locations of the MMs's offices in relation to their DRs' workspaces were documented and observed to learn if proximity influences expectations of the middle manager role. Participating MMs work in a variety of configurations: within a suite of offices or close cubicles, an adjacent row of offices, a combination of adjacent offices and remote offices, or offices and cubicles distributed across a large work area. Most of the MMs do not have offices in close proximity to their SMs; there were three where two SMs also have offices in the large work area, and where an SM has an office within the same suite as the MM.

The data suggest that office location may influence DR expectations. In three cases where the middle managers have offices within close proximity to their direct reports' work spaces, there was a high degree of overlap among the expectations of the middle manager's role set members. Also in each of these three cases, all of the participating direct reports are classified staff, without faculty status.

One exception to congruity among role set members due to proximity is the case of the branch library middle manager: even though this middle manager's office is in close proximity to the three direct reports who participated in the study, the direct reports expressed several independent expectations. Moreover, the middle manager expressed no independent expectations that were not also sent from the DRs and/or the SM.

Remote offices may decrease level of agreement of MM expectations and may be related to the MM's experience of role ambiguity. This was seen in two cases, one each in DowntownULibrary and RuralULibrary. But there are too many confounding factors, such as status and time in position, to draw any firm conclusions. For example, one direct report in RuralULibrary has an office adjacent to the middle manager but expressed multiple expectations that the briefly-tenured middle manager did not express. Also, in one case in DowntownULibrary, the middle manager and direct reports work in close proximity but they all expressed several independent expectations. In this case all of the DRs were classified staff.

Most DRs reported recent formal and informal interactions with their MMs; however, proximity did have an impact on the nature of and frequency of the interactions. For example, DRs who work within the same general areas as their MMs report daily informal interactions, with two exceptions, both involving the MMs with the least amount of experience. In both of these cases, the MMs had not yet settled into a set routine of meetings, and the MMs had been promoted internally to their

middle manager positions. They also retained many of their frontline duties, one permanently and the other due to vacancies in the department. For DRs who are not in close proximity to their MMs, fewer and less recent informal interactions were reported. For example, one RuralULibrary middle manager with units distributed widely across the library building, is several hundred feet and one level away from two direct reports; the remote direct reports rarely visit the middle manager's area except for scheduled meetings. This middle manager, sensing the disadvantages of a remote office, has regularly-scheduled hours on a public service desk in the library in order to create more opportunities for informal interactions with library staff and visitors. In a similar case in DowntownULibrary, a middle manager and a direct report have offices that are similarly distant from each other, and they report interacting informally when the direct report is staffing a public services desk. In these two cases, the employees interpret time on a service desk as enabling interactions with other staff members. It is impossible to draw any conclusions about the influence of frequency of interactions on role set members' expectations of the middle manager role.

Although the organizational structures and governance of the libraries in the study had some similarities, they also had some important differences that could possibly influence the role set members' expectations of the middle manager role. The three library sites divide labor differently. UrbanULibrary and RuralULibrary have a similar number of staff; UrbanULibrary has five assistant directors whereas RuralULibrary has three middle manager department heads who report directly to the associate dean. RuralULibrary has fewer hierarchical layers: in RuralULibrary, the middle managers are at the same level as the assistant directors in DowntownULibrary and UrbanULibrary. DowntownULibrary has over 200 staff, requiring more organizational layers. Because of the greater number of staff and the concomitant division of labor, DowntownULibrary has more middle manager positions than the other sites.

Any findings from UrbanULibrary are inconclusive because of the low participation rate; still, it is useful to note that the role set members' expectations of the MM position may be different because this was the only study site where classified staff hold some MM positions and library faculty are not eligible for tenure. *Staffing* came up as an expectation only among UrbanULibrary's role set members. The middle manager there is heavily involved in staffing, particularly student employees across the organization.

In UrbanULibrary, the library director's span of control is extremely wide (12 employees), yet only

five of the library director's direct reports oversee large functional departments and hold assistant director positions. UrbanULibrary-MM1 reports to one of those ADs, yet also works mostly nights and weekends, which is a factor that isolates this middle manager and their direct reports. Logically, they might have very different expectations of the MM position than the other UrbanULibrary employees and the other participants in this study. Notably, UrbanULibrary role set members expressed dimensions that role set members at the other sites did not express at all or at much lower rates: *Handling Crises*, *Staffing*, and *Decision Making*.

The expectations of the MM's position may vary depending upon the employment classification of the role set member. Thus status may influence the employee's expectations of the middle manager position. An employee who holds faculty status may have different expectations of the middle manager than a classified staff member. In libraries where the librarians are tenure-track library faculty, the roles and responsibilities of their positions are articulated in their shared governance documents, and their job descriptions are mostly out-of-date because they are essentially the job advertisements used to recruit candidates. These library faculty in MM positions can refer to roles and responsibilities for department heads found in their library's shared governance documents. These tenure-track faculty have the added responsibility of scholarship. DowntownULibrary and RuralULibrary middle managers have both faculty and department head responsibilities. Most of their job descriptions are out-of-date. One DowntownULibrary middle manager who has not yet achieved tenure expressed that other middle managers in the division who had already achieved tenure were at different places in their careers and had different stressors if not different expectations. The classified staff member middle manager's (UrbanULibrary-MM1) duties were articulated primarily in the job description, and it was up-to-date. There was no document that applied to MM duties across that organization. Unfortunately, only one MM from UrbanULibrary participated in the study, so it is impossible to know if the absence of an overall department heads document has any impact on MM expectations.

Findings that are interesting, though, include that *Staffing* was an expectation expressed only from UrbanULibrary role set members, and they expressed *Handling Crises* more frequently. Also, no one in UrbanULibrary expressed *Planning & Organizing*, but this dimension appeared with some frequency among DowntownULibrary and RuralULibrary role set members.

There appears to be more congruity, or more overlap, among the role set members' expectations

of the MM position in cases where the middle manager is a library faculty member and the direct reports are classified staff. It also seems to be the case that these units work within close quarters. Based on the data collected, for three MMs who supervise classified staff, all of the DR expectations were shared/sent among the role set.

Library faculty more often have independent expectations, but classified staff are a mixed bag: one long-time DR has several independent expectations, but another does not. In another exception, one DowntownULibrary middle manager's DRs have a broad range of experience levels, and their expectations do not overlap much.

A preliminary conclusion is that employee status is a factor in MM expectations; moreover, it appears that in the cases where the MMs directly supervise classified staff, there is greater congruity of their (the MM and DRs') expectations of the MM position. Additionally, classified staff DRs' expectations are more likely to overlap with the senior manager's expectations than are the expectations of DRs who hold faculty status.

RQ1a: What activities and behaviors do academic library middle managers engage in to fulfill their roles and job duties?

The MMs submitted a three-month portion of their work calendars for examination. For MMs from DowntownULibrary and RuralULibrary, the time period was March-May 2015. For UrbanULibrary, where data collection took place in November, the calendar sample was August-October 2015. The MMs were asked to explain all calendar entries, which were later coded using the Taxonomy dimensions. The list below indicates the dimensions found in more than half of the middle managers' calendars.

- *Representing the Organization* (11 out of 11 MMs had at least one entry coded as this in their calendars)
- "Collaborating" (11/11)
- *Technical Proficiency* (10/11)
- *Staffing* (9/11)
- *Planning & Organizing* (8/11)
- *Guiding, Directing & Motivating* (8/11)
- *Maintaining Relationships* (8/11)
- *Coordinating Subordinates* (7/11)
- "Filling in" (7/11)
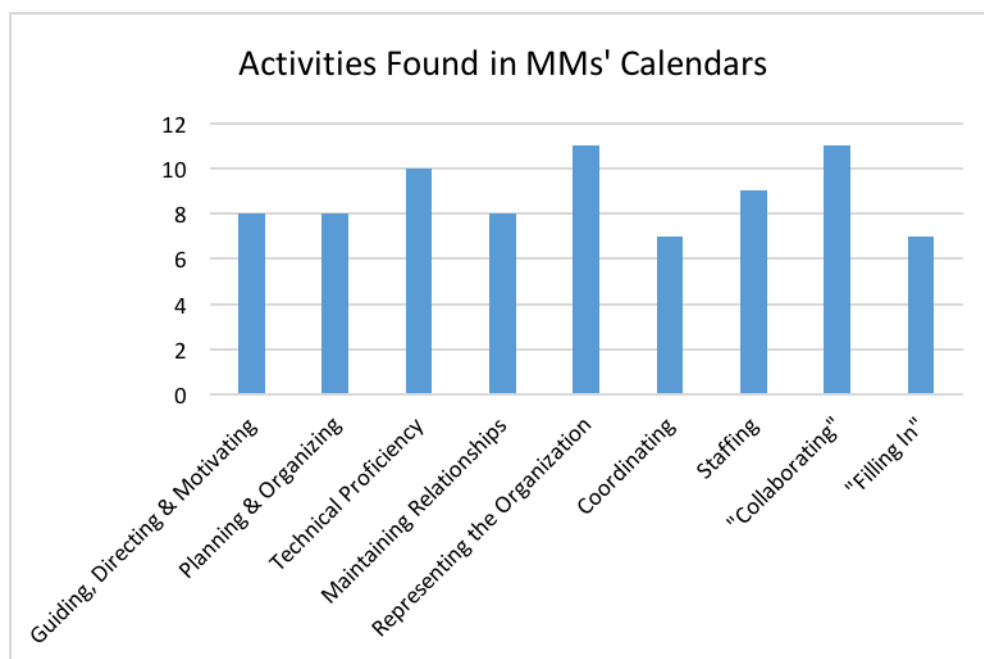
Figure 4.5: Number of MM calendars in which these activities were found

All of the MMs had one or more calendar entry coded as "collaborating" and *Representing the Organization.* "Representing the organization to customers and the public" means representing the organization to those not in the organization; maintaining good organizational image to customers, the public, stockholders, the government, and so on (as appropriate); and dealing with customer/client problems. It includes public relations and community serviceâresponsibility for maintaining an appropriate organization image, which may involve contributing professional expertise in response to community needs.

Examples of *Representing the Organization* found in the MMs' calendars include donor relations (university archives and records manager MM; rare books and manuscripts MM; branch library MM), serving as an expert consultant to external groups (cataloging MM; university archives and records MM; rare books and manuscripts MM; Systems MM), serving on campus committees and task forces (almost all), state-wide consortia and governmental agencies, meetings with vendors, commencement, and accreditation visits.

"Collaborating" is one of the codes that had to be added to the Taxonomy dimensions. It captures collaboration across units in the library or with extra-library units, agencies, organizations, and individuals. This is distinct from the Taxonomy dimension *Coordinating Subordinates*, which is a

managerial function pertaining to the manager's duties within their unit/department.

MMs' collaborators represent a broad range of role senders and activities, across library departments, across campus, and outside of the campus environment. This is not an exhaustive list but gives some idea about the diversity of the MMs' collaborators: co-authors; library systems staff; grants office; academic advisors; student financial services; security company; campus compliance office; emergency planning groups; and vendors.

Clearly, not all of the Taxonomy dimensions can be expressed in a calendar entry (e.g., *Communicating Effectively*), but these data and analyses suggest some food for thought regarding conflicting or congruent expectations. A high number of participants expect *Technical Proficiency* of their MMs, which consists of keeping up-to-date technically, solving technical problems, possessing sufficient technical job knowledge to perform effectively in their own specialty, and providing technical advice to others in the organization. Based on the coded calendar entries, ten out of 11 MMs spent some time on activities related to *Technical Proficiency*. Similarly, *Coordinating Subordinates*, *Guiding, Directing & Motivating*, and *Maintaining Relationships* are represented in role set members' expectations as well as MMs' calendar activities.

There was no attempt to measure the frequency or relative importance of the calendar entries; instead, this is an exploration and description of how the MMs may spend their time and with whom they collaborate to accomplish their work-related duties. These data cannot be directly compared with the previously reported expectations because several Taxonomy dimensions can not be articulated in a calendar. For example, *Communicating Effectively* is an expectation that was reported frequently by all role set members, but it is close to impossible to articulate that in a calendar entry since communication happens in a variety of ways and the quality of the communication is not quantified there.

Regardless, there are some interesting things to note. *Planning & Organizing*, "Collaborating", "filling in", *Representing the Organization*, and *Staffing* were expressed as MM expectations by very few role set members, yet these activities appear in almost all of the MMs' calendars.

4.2.2 Research Question 2

Where do the perceived roles and expectations originate? How do academic library employees learn what middle manager means? Participants were asked how they gained an understanding of the middle manager role in their organizations; MMs were asked where they thought expectations

were coming from; and SMs were asked how they sent expectations to their MMs.

Several middle managers indicated members of their role set serve as role senders. Nine of the MMs reported their DRs were role senders. Interestingly, the two MMs with the least amount of experience as middle managers reported no expectations from their DRs. Eight of the 11 MMs reported their SMs as role senders. Two RuralULibrary MMs specifically mentioned modeling their SM's behavior. Collaborators outside of their immediate role set were rarely indicated as role senders.

Five MMs reported that other middle managers, organizational documents, and their own perceptions were role senders. Finally, three DowntownULibrary MMs specifically mentioned their library director functioned as a role sender.

In order to communicate their expectations to their MMs, all of the SMs have regularly scheduled meetings with their MMs, including individual one-on-ones and group department heads meetings. Group and individual email and formal procedures such as evaluations and tenure processes also communicate expectations to the MMs. Informal interaction between the SMs and their MMs varies. Where SMs have offices located within the same general work area as most of their MMs, frequent informal, unplanned interactions were reported and observed. Two senior managers have MMs in multiple remote locations within the main library and another building; UrbanULibrary's SM reported and was also observed managing by walking around, deliberately leaving the administrative suite to interact with others around the building. DowntownULibrary-SM1, who oversees three MMs who participated in the study, has an office located in the primary library administrative suite. This senior manager was never observed walking around those departments, and informal interactions between the SM and the other role set members were infrequently reported.

The DRs learned the middle manager role through a variety of organizational mechanisms: one previously held the MM's position; two held middle manager positions themselves in other organizations or departments; two DRs learned the role through participation in search or tenure committees; however, most expressed that they learned the role through direct interaction and observation of middle managers in their current or previous organizations. More than half of the DRs indicated that organization documents such as strategic plans and organization charts help them understand the library's structure and their middle manager's place in the hierarchy; however, most DRs placed little value on the relationship between organizational documents and understanding the duties of the middle manager.

Job descriptions and department heads (DH) documents attempt to convey the organization's view of the middle managers' responsibilities. The existence of up-to-date job descriptions among study sites was variable, and in all cases except one they were the job advertisements published when candidates were being recruited. This suggests that job descriptions are not viable, useful documents in DowntownULibrary and RuralULibrary for describing current responsibilities as jobs change and develop over time. Instead, library faculty look to shared governance documents for indicators of their responsibilities.

The job descriptions/advertisements for RuralULibrary middle managers are relatively current because these positions were all recruited within the past four years. Department heads documents were available for DowntownULibrary and RuralULibrary, while only a job description was available for UrbanULibrary.

The following analysis takes into account the four available and viable job descriptions from UrbanULibrary and RuralULibrary, plus the DH documents from DowntownULibrary and RuralULibrary. The Taxonomy dimensions that appear across the four job descriptions and two DH documents are *Guiding, Directing & Motivating* and *Administration & Paperwork*, giving some indication about what all of the study MMs are expected to do. Five out of six documents indicate the following dimensions: *Planning & Organizing, Training, Coaching & Developing, Technical Proficiency, Staffing, Monitoring & Controlling*, and *Collecting & Interpreting Data*.

The Taxonomy dimensions that do not appear in any of these documents include *Persisting, Handling Crises, Selling & Influencing*, and "modeling behavior". Dimensions that appear in only one document (noted in parentheses) include *Representing the Organization* (DH document), *Decision Making* (job description), and "filling in" (job description). Two documents articulate *Communicating Effectively* (both DH documents), *Maintaining Relationships* (both DH documents), and *Organizational Commitment* (one job description and one DH document). "Collaborating", *Delegating*, and *Coordinating subordinates* appeared in half of the documents examined, although "collaborating" did not appear in any DH documents.

Similar to the calendar activities, care must be taken in interpreting these data, as simply counting dimensions may not indicate the importance of a particular responsibility. However, this is where triangulation supports the research; if a particular dimension appears in all documents or none of the documents, one may draw some inferences and compare these to the expectations articulated

by the role senders who participated in this study. And, the articulation of a responsibility in a department heads document may have more weight than its appearance in a document that was essentially a job ad. For example, the dimension *Planning & Organizing* was found in all of the documents except for UrbanULibrary-MM1's job description, in one way supporting the result that none of UrbanULibrary-MM1's role senders reported *Planning & Organizing* as an expectation. Moreover, despite the articulation of *Planning & Organizing* in all but one of the documents, only 22% of all study participants reported it as an expectation of middle managers in their organizations.

Dimensions that appear in most of the documents but were not expressed frequently among the role set members include (role senders percentages in parentheses) *Training, Coaching & Developing* (22%), *Administration & Paperwork* (15%), *Staffing* (2%), *Monitoring & Controlling* (15%), *Delegating* (7%), and *Collecting & Interpreting Data* (5%).

A dimension that was frequently expressed by role senders and also appeared to be important in the documents (because it appeared in the DH documents and UrbanULibrary-MM1's job description) is *Coordinating Subordinates* (50%). *Representing the Organization* appears only in the RuralULibrary DH document and was reported by only 7% of participants; *Technical Proficiency* appears in all documents except DowntownULibrary's DH and 73% of role senders expect it; DowntownULibrary and RuralULibrary DH documents articulate *Maintaining Relationships*, and 39% of role senders expect this.

The relative absence of "collaborating" and *Representing the Organization* in these organizational documents and their frequent occurrence in the MMs' calendar entries suggest a disconnect between the organizational objectives and how the middle managers actually spend their time. Or, it represents that middle managers recognize that they need to spend time on certain activities, even if they aren't articulated in organizational documents, in order to accomplish organizational objectives. For example, middle managers may realize that they cannot successfully plan, organize, and coordinate the work of their units in a vacuum; they must collaborate across units to effectively and efficiently accomplish work projects, and they must represent and be present among a variety of different stakeholders. This includes sitting on committees, but it also means being an expert advisor as well as bringing relevant information back into the library and being an adequate conduit of information.

4.2.3 Research Question 3

To what extent do academic library middle managers (MM) experience role conflict, role ambiguity, and turnover intentions?

The MMs' experience of role ambiguity was measured using the Abridged Role Conflict and Ambiguity Scales. On a scale of 1-7, the MMs in this study reported a mean role ambiguity score of 5.36, indicating that it is "somewhat true" that they have role clarity (e.g., they know what is expected of them, what their responsibilities are, how much authority they have, etc). See Appendix B for a detailed list of the scale items.

The MMs' experience of role conflict was also measured using the Abridged Role Conflict and Ambiguity Scales; it is recommended that the two constructs be reported separately based upon previous reliability tests. Role conflict in the questionnaire is made up of two components: intra-sender conflict and inter-sender conflict. Intra-sender conflict occurs when the expectations from one role sender are themselves incompatible; inter-sender conflict means that expectations from one role sender are in conflict with the expectations from other role senders. As can be seen in the Table 4.7, overall the MMs in this study report 3.66 or "somewhat untrue" intra-sender conflict, 3.84 or closer to "neutral" inter-sender conflict, and 3.75 in the combined role conflict construct. Overall, the library middle managers in this study reported lower role conflict than was reported by entry-level and high-level university administrators in an earlier study.

	Role Ambiguity	Role Conflict	Turnover Intentions
All MMs	5.36 (M)	3.75 (M)	2.03 (M)
	3.67 - 6.5 (R)	1.75 - 6.13 (R)	1 - 3.33 (R)
	0.9 (SD)	1.31 (SD)	0.73 (SD)
DowntownULibrary	5.52	3.21	2.14
	4.67 - 6.5	1.75 - 5	1 - 3.33
	0.63	1.18	0.73
UrbanULibrary	6.17	4.75	2.67
	na	na	na
	na	na	na
RuralULibrary	4.72	4.67	1.56
	3.67 - 6.33	3.5 - 6.13	1 - 2.33
	1.16	1.09	0.57

Table 4.7: Abridged Role Ambiguity and Role Conflict Scales and Turnover Intentions Results

On a scale of 1-5, the MMs reported low turnover intentions, indicated by an average score of

2.03 or "disagree" on the Intention to Turnover Scale.

As a group, then, these middle managers experience low role ambiguity, low role conflict, and report little intention to leave their current jobs.

4.2.4 Research Question 4

How is middle manager role conflict, role ambiguity, or turnover intentions related to their participation in strategic activities?

In addition to the traditional managerial activities that are represented by the Taxonomy dimensions, the MMs were asked to fill out a questionnaire about the frequency with which they engage in strategic activities. The Overall Strategic Activity Score may fall between 16-80, indicating that they never perform any of the strategic activities (score = 16) or that they frequently perform all of the strategic activities (score = 80). The average Overall Strategic Activity Score for all MMs in the study is 54.64, indicating that as a group, they participate in strategic activities more than occasionally but less than regularly. The mean scores are reported in Table 4.9.

Strategic activity is also measured based upon the behaviors that represent specific strategic roles. The 16 items of the Strategic Activity questionnaire are grouped to convey behaviors that collectively describe Championing Alternatives, Synthesizing Information, Facilitating Adaptability, and Implementing Deliberate Strategy. Examining these concepts separately helps describe the nature of the strategic activities that academic library middle managers perform, indicating where and how they participate in the strategy formation and implementation processes in their organizations. See Table 4.8.

Strategic Role	m, All MMs
Championing Alternatives (range: 4-20)	14.27
Synthesizing Information (range: 3-15)	10.36
Facilitating Adaptability (range: 5-25)	15.00
Implementing Deliberate Strategy (range: 4-20)	15.00
Overall Strategic Activity (range: 16-80)	54.64

Table 4.8: Middle Managers' Overall and Component Strategic Activity Scores

The relationships among MM strategic activity level, role ambiguity, role conflict and turnover intentions were tested to determine significance (see Table 4.10). Overall, there is a medium strength positive relationship between overall strategic activity and role ambiguity (t = 1.9545, df = 9, p-value

MMs	Overall Strategic Activity Score (m)	Range	SD
DowntownULibrary $n=7$	57	52-64	4.28
UrbanULibrary $n=1$	58	n/a	n/a
RuralULibrary $n=3$	48	35-57	11.53

Table 4.9: Overall Mean Strategic Activity Scores for MMs in each Library

= 0.08237) and a medium strength negative relationship between role ambiguity and role conflict (t = -1.9437, df = 9, p-value = 0.08381). While neither of these results is statistically significant, it is worthwhile to note the relationship in this small sample for further investigation in a larger study.

	Strategic Activities	Role Ambiguity	Role Conflict	Turnover Intentions
Strategic Activities	1.00	0.55	-0.22	0.21
Role Ambiguity	0.55	1.00	-0.54	-0.11
Role Conflict	-0.22	-0.54	1.00	0.27
Turnover Intentions	0.21	-0.11	0.27	1.00

Table 4.10: Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficients for Middle Managers' Strategic Activity, Role Ambiguity and Conflict, and Turnover Intentions Scores

In examining the relationships among the strategic role components, these were found to be significant at the 0.05 level: there is a positive, medium strength relationship between the strategic role Championing and Role Ambiguity (r = 0.5942666, t = 2.2167, df = 9, p-value = 0.05386), and it is statistically significant. There is a strong positive relationship between the Synthesizing role and Role Ambiguity (r = 0.6113136, t = 2.3174, df = 9, p-value = 0.04568). There are no significant relationships between Facilitating Adaptability and role ambiguity, conflict or turnover intentions. There is a strong positive relationship between Implementing Deliberate Strategy and Turnover Intentions (r = 0.6631733, t = 2.6581, df = 9, p-value = 0.02613).

The relationships between overall strategic activity and intra-sender conflict, and between overall strategic activity and inter-sender conflict do not appear to be correlational. There is no clear pattern. There appears to be a positive relationship between the Overall Strategic Activity Score and the role ambiguity component (see Figure 4.6).

Figure 4.6: Scatterplot of Overall Strategic Activity Score and Role Ambiguity

4.3   Cross case analysis

Themes, similarities and contrasts emerged across library sites and across the individual middle manager cases. An examination of the middle manager cases based on which organization they worked in revealed how the workplace may influence role set members' expectations of the middle manager role, and time-in-position.

4.3.1   DowntownULibrary

RQ1: What are the expectations expressed by the role set members in DowntownULibrary? The following expectations were expressed most frequently by the 25 role set members in DowntownULibrary:

- *Guiding, Directing & Motivating* (13/25)
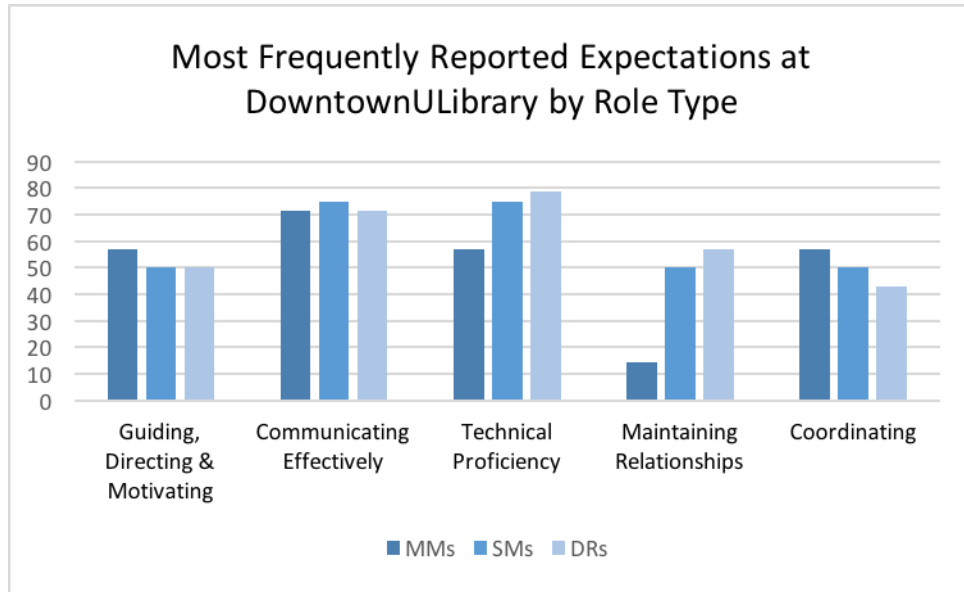
Figure 4.7: Frequently expressed expectations of participants from DowntownULibrary, in percentages.

- *Communicating Effectively* (18/25)
- *Technical Proficiency* (18/25)
- *Coordinating Subordinates* (12/25)
- *Maintaining Relationships* (11/25)

Figure 4.7 indicates the breakdown of DowntownULibrary's expectations by role set member type. It is easy to see at a glance that a higher percentage of senior managers and direct reports expect *Maintaining Relationships* than do the middle managers. Also, a lower percentage of DowntownULibrary middle managers expressed *Technical Proficiency* as an expectation than did the senior managers and the direct reports.

Communicating Effectively seems important in DowntownULibrary, as all role set members reported this expectation frequently. *Coordinating Subordinates* was expressed by 50% or more of the middle managers and senior managers in DowntownULibrary, but by fewer than half of the direct reports. Overall, there is enough overlap among role members' expectations to suggest some congruity of expectations of the middle manager by most of the role set members from DowntownULibrary.

RQ1a. Based on the analysis of calendar entries, more than half of the MMs at DowntownULibrary had entries coded with the following dimensions:

- *Planning & Organizing* (6/7)

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- *Guiding, Directing & Motivating* (5/7)
- *Representing the Organization* (7/7)
- *Technical Proficiency* (6/7)
- *Maintaining Relationships* (5/7)
- *Coordinating Subordinates* (4/7)
- *Staffing* (6/7)
- "Collaborating" (7/7)
- "Filling in" (5/7)

Planning & Organizing, *Representing the Organization*, *Staffing*, "Collaborating", and "Filling in" are highly represented here but not in the role set members' expectations. [Note that *Communicating Effectively* is unlikely to be articulated on a calendar but may be occurring.]

Findings indicate that the discourse used to talk about middle management is different than the actual tasks and activities middle managers perform in order to accomplish their and their organizations' objectives. There is no playbook that says do x, y, z to get to *Planning & Organizing*. MMs have latitude and autonomy in determining appropriate activities and behaviors. Collaborators were found within and without the library and varied widely. All DowntownULibrary middle managers had entries coded as *Representing the Organization* in their calendars. This exposure to diverse role senders makes them more vulnerable to role conflict and role ambiguity. There were no distinct patterns of collaborations based upon library site.

RQ2. Participants were asked how they gained an understanding of the middle manager role in their organizations; MMs were asked where they thought expectations were coming from; and SMs were asked how they sent expectations to their MMs. These role senders are reported below, including organizational documents that may articulate middle manager responsibilities.

In DowntownULibrary, almost all (6 out of 7) MMs reported their DRs as role senders. The middle manager with the briefest time-in-position reported that no expectations were sent from the DRs. A majority of DowntownULibrary middle managers reported their SMs (5 of 7) and other MMs (4 of 7) as role senders. Less than half reported their own perceptions as role senders.

Three DowntownULibrary MMs specifically mentioned their library director as a role sender.

In order to communicate their expectations to their MMs, all of the DowntownULibrary SMs have regularly scheduled meetings with their MMs, including individual one-on-ones and group department heads meetings. Group and individual email and formal procedures such as evaluations and tenure

processes also communicate expectations to the MMs. Informal interaction between the SMs and their MMs varies. Most DowntownULibrary SMs (3 of 4) have offices located within the same general work area as their MMs, which facilitates frequent informal, unplanned interactions. Two of the three SMs were observed walking around their departments. The remaining DowntownULibrary SM has MMs in multiple remote locations within the main library and another building. Informal interactions with MMs and their DRs are therefore limited.

Most DRs expressed that they learned the middle manager role through direct interaction and observation of middle managers in their current or previous organizations. In DowntownULibrary, organization charts are sent out periodically; more than half mentioned these as being helpful in understanding the organizational hierarchy.

The job descriptions for DowntownULibrary were not up-to-date and were not included in the analysis. Table 4.11 shows the expectations that appear in the department heads section of DowntownULibrary's governing document.

Table 4.11: Expectations of department heads at DowntownULibrary

Taxonomy Dimension	DowntownU
Planning & Organizing	●
Guiding, Directing & Motivating	●
Training, Coaching & Developing	●
Communicating	●
Representing the Organization	
Technical Proficiency	
Administration & Paperwork	●
Maintaining Relationships	●
Coordinating	●
Decision Making	
Staffing	●
Persisting	
Handling Crises	
Organizational Commitment	
Monitoring & Controlling	●
Delegating	●
Selling & Influencing	
Collecting & Interpreting Data	
"collaborating"	
"modeling behavior"	
"filling in"	

The stacked frequency chart in figure 4.8 shows the overall count of expectations for participants from DowntownULibrary; this can be compared to the expectations articulated in DowntownULibrary's department heads document.
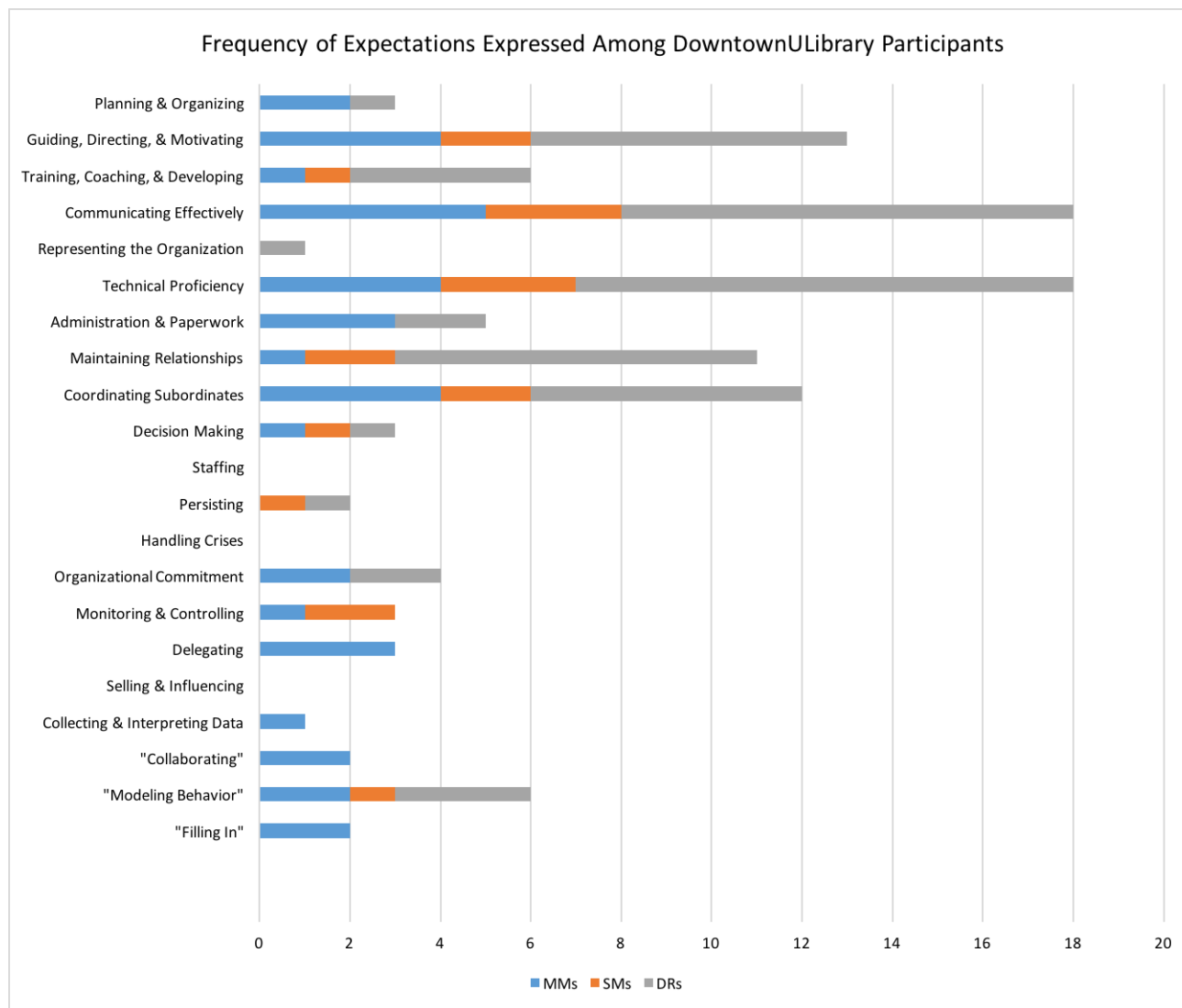
Figure 4.8: Expectations of the 25 DowntownULibrary participants

Based on reporting frequency, DowntownULibrary SMs emphasize six dimensions: *Guiding, Directing & Motivating*, *Communicating Effectively*, *Technical Proficiency*, *Maintaining Relationships*, *Coordinating Subordinates*, and *Monitoring & Controlling*. Note that *Technical Proficiency* is not found in the department heads document. Also, five of the department heads document expectations were not reported frequently among the DowntownULibrary SMs.

Less than half of the DowntownULibrary middle managers reported organizational documents as role senders; two of them mentioned the DH document as a role sender and one MM mentioned the job description as a role sender.

More than half of the participants from DowntownULibrary expect *Guiding, Directing & Motivating*, *Communicating Effectively*, and *Technical Proficiency*. Almost half expect *Maintaining Relationships* and *Coordinating Subordinates*. These results might indicate some incongruity or lack of understanding between role set member expectations and department head document guidelines, especially in the areas of *Planning & Organizing*, *Training, Coaching & Developing*, *Administration & Paperwork*, *Staffing*, and *Delegating*.

Based on the calendar analysis, also, DowntownULibrary MMs spend time on expectations not articulated in their department heads document: *Representing the Organization*, "collaborating", and "filling in".

RQ3. On a scale of 1-7, a role ambiguity score of 5.52 was recorded for the seven DowntownULibrary MMs, slightly higher than the score for all MM participants, indicating very low role ambiguity from this group. For DowntownULibrary MMs, intra-sender conflict is low (score is 2.89), inter-sender conflict is closer to neutral (at 3.54), and overall role conflict is the lowest of all three library sites (at 3.21). The mean for turnover intentions for DowntownULibrary MMs is 2.14, indicating that they do not often think about quitting nor are they actively looking for a new job. Individual MM scores on the Abridged Role Conflict and Ambiguity Scales are presented in Table 4.12.

DowntownULibrary	Role Ambiguity	Role Conflict	Turnover Intentions
MM1	4.83	1.88	1.67
MM2	5.17	4.00	3.33
MM3	5.67	4.25	1.67
MM4	5.67	2.25	2.67
MM5	6.17	3.38	2.67
MM6	4.67	5.00	2.00
MM7	6.50	1.75	1.00
All MMs	5.36 (*M*)	3.75 (*M*)	2.03 (*M*)

Table 4.12: DowntownULibrary Middle Manager Questionnaire Scores

RQ4. DowntownULibrary middle managers participate in strategic activities at a slightly higher frequency than all middle manager participants (*Mean* = 57; see Table 4.13). As indicated in Figure

4.9, middle managers who participate in strategic activities more frequently report greater role clarity.

Strategic Role	DowntownULibrary MMs
	m, n=7
Championing Alternatives (range: 4-20)	14.86
Synthesizing Information (range: 3-15)	10.57
Facilitating Adaptability (range: 5-25)	15.43
Implementing Deliberate Strategy (range: 4-20)	16.14
Overall Strategic Activity (range: 16-80)	57

Table 4.13: DowntownULibrary Middle Managers' *mean* Overall and Component Strategic Activity Scores
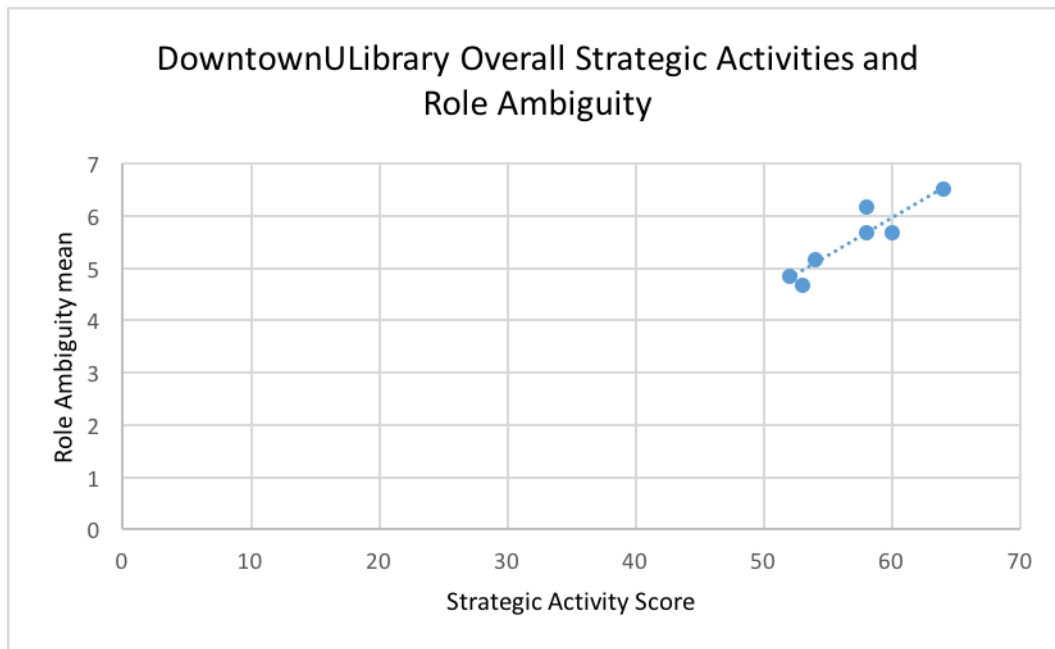
Figure 4.9: Scatterplot of DowntownULibrary Overall Strategic Activity Score and Role Ambiguity

In DowntownULibrary, there appears to be agreement among the role set members about expecting their MMs to communicate effectively and to have and maintain their technical proficiency, although less than half of the MMs themselves identified *Technical Proficiency* as an expectation. Overall, the SMs have fewer expectations of the MMs than the DRs and the MMs have of the middle manager role. Dimensions addressed in the department heads document but rarely expressed by role set members include *Staffing* (0/25); *Planning & Organizing, Monitoring & Controlling*, and *Delegating* (3/25); and *Training, Coaching & Developing* and *Administration & Paperwork* (5/25).

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Conversely, *Technical Proficiency*, expressed by 17 out of 25 responding role set members, did not appear as an expectation in the department heads document; but it may have been articulated elsewhere, such as the job advertisement.

4.3.2   UrbanULibrary

RQ1. The following expectations were expressed most frequently by the four role set members in UrbanULibrary:

- *Guiding, Directing & Motivating* (2/4)
- *Communicating Effectively* (3/4)
- *Technical Proficiency* (3/4)
- *Coordinating Subordinates* (3/4)
- *Decision Making* (2/4)
- *Handling Crises* (2/4)

Figure 4.10 indicates the the expectations of UrbanULibrary participants, based on role set member type. Unlike the other sites, all of their expectations are presented. The chart shows the diversity of expectations expressed by these four individuals.

Because there was only one middle manager participant from UrbanULibrary, it is impossible to say anything conclusive about the organization as a whole. However, in the case of this one middle manager, there is minimal overlap of expectations among the role set members. In fact, there is not one universal expectation, although the majority of role set members expect *Communicating Effectively*, *Technical Proficiency*, and *Coordinating Subordinates*. Ten additional expectations are being sent to this middle manager. *Planning & Organizing* does not appear as an expectation among this role set.

RQ1a. Entries in UrbanULibrary-MM1's calendar were coded to reflect the following dimensions:

- *Planning & Organizing*
- *Guiding, Directing & Motivating*
- *Communicating Effectively* [2]
- *Representing the Organization*
- *Technical Proficiency*
- *Coordinating subordinates*

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[2]This reflects the almost-daily communication between the co-supervisors.
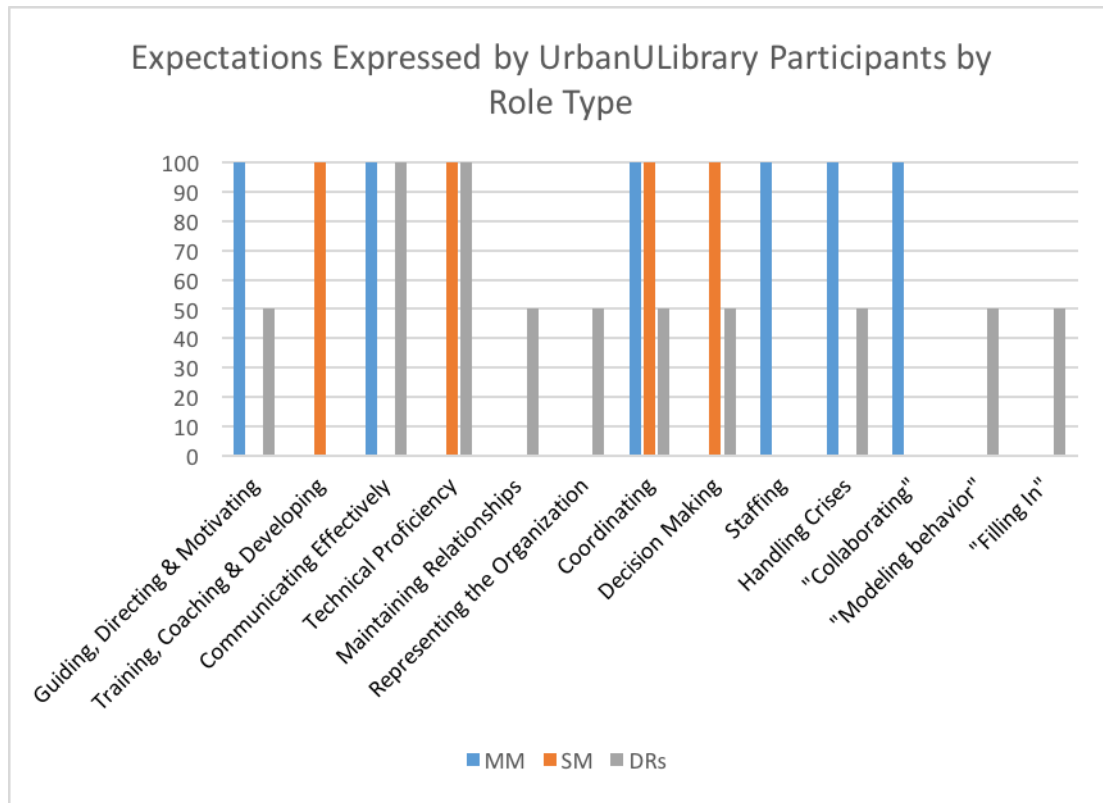
Figure 4.10: Frequently expressed expectations of all participants and all MMs, in percentages

- *Staffing*
- "Collaborating"

Evidence from this middle manager's calendar that was not articulated as an expectation includes: *Planning & Organizing*; *Representing the Organization*; *Technical Proficiency*. Understandably, *Handling Crises*, expressed as an expectation, does not appear as a calendar entry. Collaborators indicated in UrbanULibrary-MM1's calendar include academic advisors, student financial services, student activities board; security company; ILL staff and RIS staff regarding student staffing; UrbanULibrary management team; UrbanULibrary marketing committee; student recreation center regarding credit card processing procedures; representing UrbanULibrary on the campus Emergency Planning Group; involved with SGA and the library director.

RQ2. UrbanULibrary-MM1 indicated the SM, DRs, and organizational documents as role senders. Notably, MM colleagues were not indicated as role senders. The SM in this library sends expectations through verbal and email communication, plus the formal evaluation process and

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through job descriptions. They also have routine interactions when the middle manager arrives for the evening shift. The DRs learned the role through direct observation of and communication with their MM and through general work experience and hiring committee experience.

There is not an applicable department heads document for this MM, but UrbanULibrary-MM1's job description was coded to express the following expectations: *Administration & Paperwork*, *Guiding, Directing & Motivating*, *Organizational Commitment*, *Coordinating Subordinates*, *Staffing*, *Training, Coaching, & Developing*, *Delegating*, *Decision Making*, *Technical Proficiency*, *Monitoring & Controlling*, *Collecting & Interpreting Data*, "collaborating", and "filling in".

UrbanULibrary-MM1 expectations that don't appear in the job description: *Communicating Effectively*; *Handling Crises*. Job description duties that MM1 did not articulate as expectations include *Training, Coaching & Developing*; *Technical Proficiency*; *Administration & Paperwork*; *Decision Making*; *Organizational Commitment*; *Monitoring & Controlling*; *Delegating*; *Collecting & Interpreting Data*; "filling in". When asked about the accuracy of the job description, UrbanULibrary-MM1 expressed that initially there was some ambiguity about the role because of shared duties with the daytime circulation supervisor. Working with the SM, the job description is new and up-to-date, and has evolved. It took a while to hit the sweet spot with the co-supervisor.

RQ3. As is indicated in Table 4.14, UrbanULibrary-MM1 reported very high role clarity, higher than average role conflict, and low intention to turnover.

UrbanULibrary	Role Ambiguity	Role Conflict	Turnover Intentions
MM1	6.17	4.75	2.67
All MMs	5.36 (m)	3.75 (m)	2.03 (m)

Table 4.14: UrbanULibrary Middle Manager Questionnaire Scores

RQ4. Because only one middle manager at UrbanULibrary took part in the study, it is impossible to calculate any relationships among strategic activities, role ambiguity, role conflict and turnover intention except in comparison to the other two library sites. Table 4.15 indicates this middle manager's strategic activity scores, which are higher than the means for DowntownULibrary and RuralULibrary.

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Strategic Role	UrbanULibrary MM $n=1$
Championing Alternatives (range: 4-20)	16
Synthesizing Information (range: 3-15)	10
Facilitating Adaptability (range: 5-25)	16
Implementing Deliberate Strategy (range: 4-20)	16
Overall Strategic Activity (range: 16-80)	58

Table 4.15: UrbanULibrary Middle Manager's Overall and Component Strategic Activity Scores

4.3.3 RuralULibrary

RQ1. The following expectations were expressed most frequently by the 12 role set members in RuralULibrary:

- *Planning & Organizing* (6/12)
- *Guiding, Directing & Motivating* (7/12)
- *Communicating Effectively* (9/12)
- *Technical Proficiency* (9/12)
- *Coordinating Subordinates* (8/12)

Figure 4.11 indicates the breakdown of RuralULibrary's expectations by role set member type. The caveat here is that there is only one SM to whom all of the middle managers report.

Planning & Organizing comes up more frequently in RuralULibrary than the other sites. Only one RuralULibrary MM expressed *Technical Proficiency* as an expectation. Four direct reports expressed *Decision Making* as a middle manager expectation, but none of the MMs expressed this dimension, nor did the SM. The added dimension of "modeling behavior" was expressed by two of the MMs plus the SM, indicating that this might be an administrative objective in this organization.

RQ1a. More than half of the RuralULibrary MMs have the following coded entries in their calendars:

- *Guiding, Directing & Motivating* (2/3)
- *Representing the Organization* (3/3)
- *Technical Proficiency* (3/3)
- *Maintaining Relationships* (3/3)
- *Coordinating subordinates* (2/3)
- *Staffing* (2/3)
- *Organizational Commitment* (3/3)
- "Collaborating" (3/3)
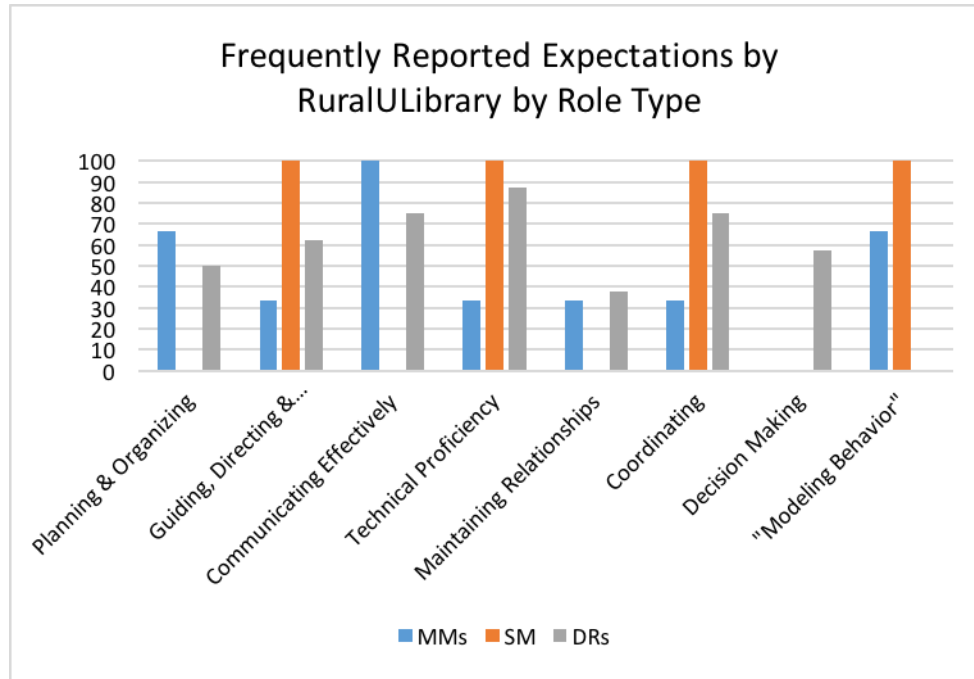
Figure 4.11: Frequently expressed expectations of all participants and all MMs, in percentages

- "Filling in" (2/3)

Representing the Organization appears in all MM calendars, but was only expressed twice as an expectation among role set members. *Maintaining Relationships* appears in every RuralULibrary MM calendar but is only expressed by 33% of the role set members (and only one MM) as an expectation. *Staffing, Organizational Commitment*, "Collaborating" and "Filling in" appear in most RuralULibrary MM calendars, but were expressed rarely as expectations by role set members.

RQ2. In RuralULibrary, two out of three middle managers reported their DRs as role senders. Notably, the RuralULibrary MM with the shortest time-in-position did not report DRs as role senders.

One RuralULibrary MM indicated peer MMs as role senders (because expectations come from everywhere). Another mentioned the governing document as a role sender. Two RuralULibrary MMs indicated their own perceptions as role senders, and they also indicated their SM as a role sender and that they tried to model their SM's behavior in their dealings with their DRs.

In order to communicate expectations to the MMs, the SM has regularly scheduled meetings with the MMs, including individual one-on-ones and leadership team meetings. Group and individual email

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and formal procedures such as evaluations and tenure processes also communicate expectations to the MMs. This SM heavily values informal interaction. RuralULibrary-SM has MMs in multiple remote locations within the main library; RuralULibrary-SM reported and was also observed managing by walking around, deliberately leaving the administrative suite to interact with others around the building.

Most RuralULibrary DRs learned the MM role through work experience and observation; one previously held the MM's position, another held a middle management position elsewhere; one DR reported tenure committee membership and another reported tenure documentation as helpful for learning the MM role.

The following expectations appear in the department heads section of RuralULibrary's governing document:

Table 4.16: Expectations of department heads at RuralULibrary

Taxonomy Dimension	RuralU
Planning & Organizing	●
Guiding, Directing & Motivating	●
Training, Coaching & Developing	●
Communicating	●
Representing the Organization	●
Technical Proficiency	●
Administration & Paperwork	●
Maintaining Relationships	●
Coordinating	●
Decision Making	
Staffing	●
Persisting	
Handling Crises	
Organizational Commitment	●
Monitoring & Controlling	●
Delegating	●
Selling & Influencing	
Collecting & Interpreting Data	●
"collaborating"	
"modeling behavior"	
"filling in"	

The sole SM at RuralULibrary reported *Guiding, Directing & Motivating*, *Technical Proficiency*, *Coordinating Subordinates* and "modeling behavior" as expectations. Note that unlike DowntownULi-

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brary, *Technical Proficiency* is expressed in the department heads document and by the SM. Also of note, the SM expects "modeling behavior", as do two of the MMs, although this dimension is not expressed in the department heads document. Interestingly, RuralULibrary-SM did not articulate *Communicating Effectively* as an expectation.
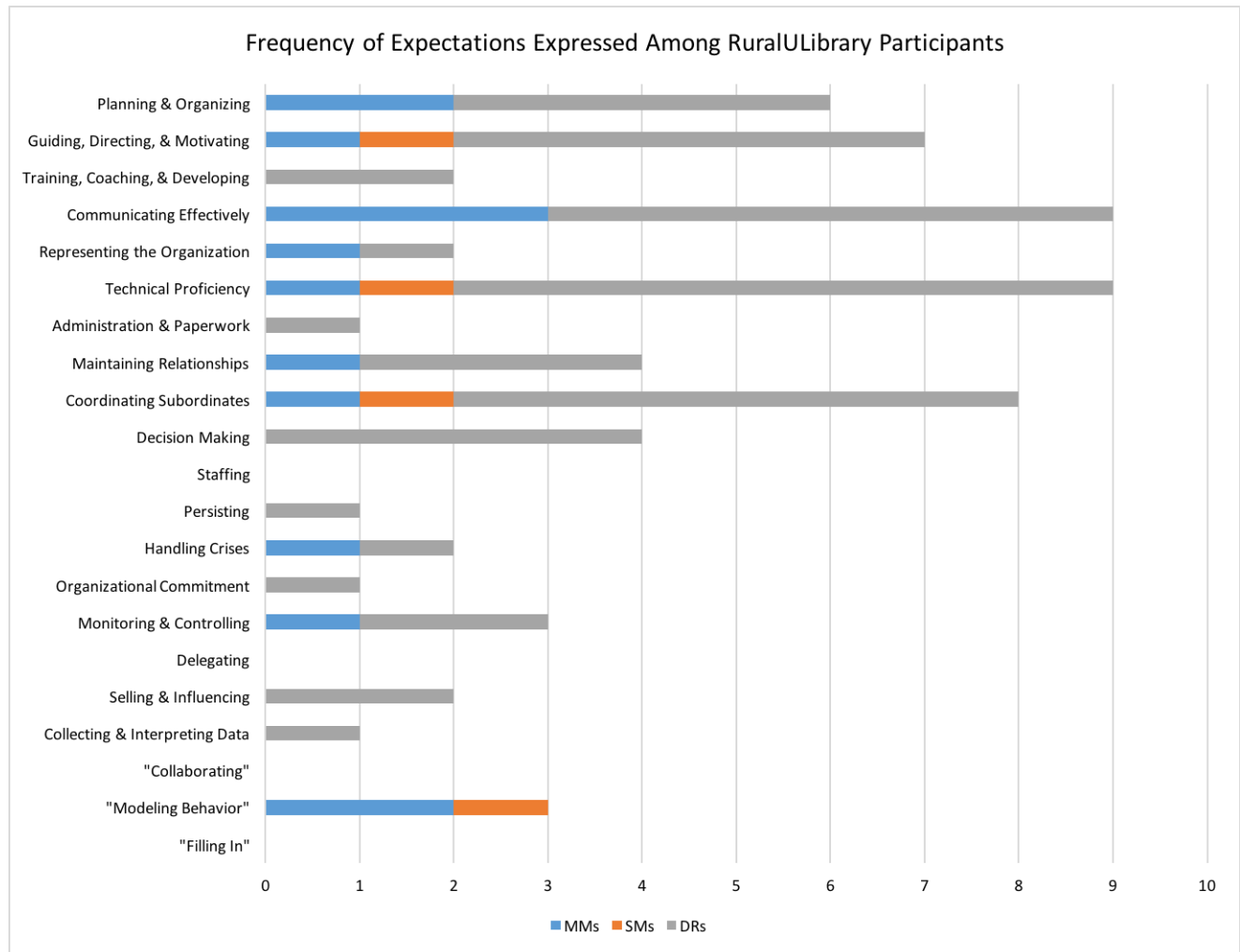
Figure 4.12: Expectations of the 12 RuralULibrary participants

Fifty percent or more of the RuralULibrary participants expressed *Planning & Organizing*, *Guiding, Directing & Motivating*, *Communicating Effectively*, *Technical Proficiency*, and *Coordinating Subordinates* as expectations. See Figure 4.12 for a snapshot of RuralULibrary expectations.

All of the RuralULibrary MMs have calendar entries that indicate *Representing the Organization*, *Technical Proficiency*, *Maintaining Relationships*, *Organizational Commitment*, and "collaborating", demonstrating a good amount of overlap with the expectations from the department heads document.

"Collaborating" consistently appears as an activity that is not articulated as an expectation.

The job descriptions for the two newest MMs in RuralULibrary were almost identical except for specific functional tasks. Eight of the dimensions found in the RuralULibrary department heads roles and responsibilities (see Table 4.16) were also identified in these two job descriptions. "Collaborating" appeared only in their job descriptions, while six dimensions in the department heads document did not appear in their job descriptions.

For the remaining RuralULibrary MM, who also had the oldest job description/advertisement, there was less overlap with the DH document, leaving nine dimensions that were articulated only in the DH document. This analysis of the RuralULibrary job descriptions suggests a couple things. First of all, they have changed over time, and there appears to be an attempt to standardize the newer MM job descriptions. Second, the newer job descriptions have more expectations overlap with the DH document than the older job description, suggesting an organizational desire to bring these documents into greater alignment. Last, the MM whose job description has less overlap with the DH document also reported the highest role ambiguity and role conflict among all RuralULibrary MMs.

RQ3. On a scale of 1-7, a role ambiguity score of 4.72 was recorded for the three RuralULibrary MMs, slightly lower than the score for all MM participants, indicating higher role ambiguity among this group. For RuralULibrary MMs, intra-sender conflict is high (score is 5), inter-sender conflict is closer to neutral (at 4.33), and they experience some overall role conflict (score is 4.67). The mean for turnover intentions for RuralULibrary MMs is 1.56, indicating that they do not often think about quitting nor are they actively looking for new jobs. Individual MM scores on the Abridged Role Conflict and Ambiguity Scales are presented in Table 4.17.

RuralULibrary	**Role Ambiguity**	**Role Conflict**	**Turnover Intentions**
MM1	6.33	3.5	1.00
MM2	3.67	6.13	2.33
MM3	4.17	4.40	1.33
All MMs	5.36 (m)	3.75 (m)	2.03 (m)

Table 4.17: RuralULibrary Middle Manager Questionnaire Scores

RQ4. The middle managers in RuralULibrary participate in strategic activities less than the middle managers in the other libraries. The strategic activity score of the MM with the briefest time-in-position brought RuralULibrary's average down significantly. The strategic activity scores

are reported in Table 4.18.

Strategic Role	RuralULibrary MMs
	m, n=3
Championing Alternatives (range: 4-20)	12.33
Synthesizing Information (range: 3-15)	10.00
Facilitating Adaptability (range: 5-25)	13.67
Implementing Deliberate Strategy (range: 4-20)	12.00
Overall Strategic Activity (range: 16-80)	48

Table 4.18: RuralULibrary Middle Managers' *mean* Overall and Component Strategic Activity Scores

As a group, RuralULibrary middle managers universally expressed one expectation of their role: *Communicating Effectively*. Two out of three expressed *Planning & Organizing* and "modeling behavior". Nine additional expectations were expressed by at least one MM from RuralULibrary.

There is not one universal expectation among the 12 interviewed (out of a possible 19 total) role set members in RuralULibrary. The dimension reported most frequently is *Communicating Effectively*, expressed by everyone but the SM and one DR. *Technical Proficiency* was expressed by all but one DR and 2 MMs.

One expectation expressed by the SM and 2 MMs is "modeling behavior", which (the researcher believes) is a key characteristic of the culture at RuralULibrary.

It is interesting that only one role set member in RuralULibrary expressed *Representing the Organization* as an expectation, although this is the dimension that appears in every MM's calendar across all sites for this study. This may be an indicator of the lack of understanding of the activities that the MMs are engaged in, as well as the expectations of their role.

Dimensions addressed in the department heads document but rarely expressed by role set members: *Training, Coaching & Developing* was expressed by two DRs; *Administration & Paperwork* was expressed by one DR; *Staffing* (no one); *Organizational Commitment* (one DR); *Delegating* (no one); *Collecting & Interpreting Data* (one DR); however, all of these dimensions appeared as activities in one or more RuralULibrary MM's calendar sample. In other words, the department heads document indicates these dimensions as responsibilities, and MMs are performing related activities at least to some degree, but they only appear as the expectations of a very few DRs. This indicates some incongruity among the expectations of the role set members versus the organizational documents and the MMs actual activities.

There were some differences based on functional areas: RuralULibrary-MM1 expressed *Technical Proficiency* and *Handling Crises* as expectations, but the other two MMs did not. This may be related to the fact that RuralULibrary-MM1 directly supervises staff who perform similar duties (reference, research and instruction services) and this MM also takes part in those activities, even if to a limited degree. The other MMs in RuralULibrary directly supervise unit heads who oversee their own functional units and perhaps themselves are expected to have technical proficiency and handle crises. RuralULibrary-MM2 expressed "MMAccessibility" while the others did not. This concern may be a function of RuralULibrary-MM2's remote office location from two direct reports and their units, while the other two MMs have offices among or very convenient to their DRs.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

What does "middle manager" mean within the context of an academic library? This study attempted to answer this question by gathering the expectations of each member of the middle manager's role set, by examining the organizational documents that delineate the work responsibilities and behaviors of the middle manager, by analyzing the middle manager's activities documented on their calendars (including their collaborators), by observing their proximity to role set members and their interactions, and by measuring the extent of middle managers' involvement in strategic activities. In addition, this study sought to determine the relationship of middle manager expectations and activities to their experience of role conflict, role ambiguity, and intentions to quit their jobs.

Potential themes, relationships, and meanings have emerged as outcomes of this descriptive and exploratory study. Factors that emerged as having influence on the expectations of middle managers in academic libraries include the classification status of the employees, the orientation of the middle manager's work unit, and the time-in-position of the middle manager. These are expanded upon and discussed below. In an attempt to summarize the study findings related to the meanings of middle management, a composite based upon the study research questions will be presented. Finally, potential impact of this study and future research opportunities will be presented and discussed, including the application of role theory, the taxonomy of managerial performance, and strategic roles to the academic library middle manager population, and suggestions for the preparation of future academic library middle managers.

5.1 Status of the employees

Classification, or employee status, has an impact on the expectations of the middle manager's role set members, both in terms of number of expectations and degree of consensus. In cases where the direct reports are classified staff members, there is greater expectations consensus among the role set; in cases where the direct reports hold faculty status, there is less consensus among the role set. Faculty-status direct reports also expressed a higher number of expectations of their middle

managers than classified staff direct reports.

In cases where the direct reports are classified staff, all of the DR expectations were shared among the role set members, including the senior managers. This is not surprising, in that classified staff members tend to work in closer proximity to and learn the MM role directly from their middle managers. Classified staff members are probably more closely supervised by their middle managers; if so, it helps explain how the DRs and their MMs are more closely aligned in their expectations of the middle manager role.

In all cases where the middle manager oversees a group of faculty members, the expectations overlap ratio was low (18% or lower). There are several reasons for this result. Library faculty members are professionals with their own goals and a high degree of autonomy, and even though they have periodic individual interactions with their middle managers, they expressed dissimilar expectations of their middle managers. It is conceivable that the channels through which these organizational actors send and receive role expectations is impeded by organizational or interpersonal factors. Recall that in Katz and Kahn's role episode the organizational (structure, policies, rewards, and penalties) and interpersonal factors may moderate the sending and receiving of role expectations. This situation negatively impacts organizational effectiveness because the organizational actors must often negotiate the activities and behaviors the middle managers are expected to perform. Library faculty members' dissimilar set of expectations also implies that these faculty-level team members are less knowledgable about how their MMs spend their time and in what situations DRs should or would consult their middle managers. This could be due to a lack of interest, that they are left alone to draw their own conclusions, or that MMs work more closely with non-faculty DRs to intentionally direct their work and influence their expectations. To a certain extent, all library faculty members are peers, which obfuscates the hierarchical reporting arrangement. Middle managers who are exposed to these incongruous expectations are vulnerable to role conflict and must navigate these situations with effective coping strategies.

5.2 Orientation of the middle manager's work unit

The nature of the departments the middle managers oversee influences the expectations of the middle manager's role set members and the middle manager's experience of role conflict and ambiguity. For this discussion, these work units are characterized as homogeneous or heterogeneous. Examples of homogeneous units that participated in this study include a special collections cataloging

unit, a research and instruction department, a circulation unit, and a group of subject selectors. Heterogeneous cases include those where the middle manager has as direct reports two or more library faculty supervisors who oversee distinct units, or where within one unit the employees perform disparate tasks. Examples include a branch library manager who directly supervises a cataloger, an acquisitions person, a research and instruction librarian, a circulation manager and an evening manager; a middle manager who oversees the university archivist and the university records manager; a middle manager who oversees manuscripts and rare books curators and processors; and a middle manager who oversees systems, access services, and digital initiatives departments. Six of the study middle managers manage departments and/or employees who perform similar tasks or have similar responsibilities, while five middle managers oversee departments that perform heterogeneous tasks. Managers who oversee more than one unit and those who manage units in which the employees perform heterogeneous sets of tasks are more vulnerable to role conflict and role ambiguity.

While the middle managers who oversee homogeneous work units receive more expectations from their role set members (M = 11.3), the expectations consensus ratio (16%) indicates a greater degree of overlap among those expectations. Conversely, middle managers with heterogeneous departments receive fewer expectations (M = 9.4), but the expectations consensus ratio is 14.6%. [1]

MMs in this study who oversee heterogeneous departments have fewer expectations sent to them, but they experience more role ambiguity, higher overall role conflict, and lower turnover intentions than middle managers who oversee homogeneous units. This finding supports previous research that boundary-spanning managers are more likely to experience role conflict (Friedman, 1992; Kahn et al., 1964; Miles & Perreault, 1976; Whetten, 1978) and role ambiguity (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993; Parkington & Schneider, 1979); and role ambiguity is an antecedent to burnout (Ambrose et al., 2014). The boundary-spanning managers also have been in middle management for a longer period of time. Time-in-position (or job tenure) may moderate the impact of role ambiguity. MMs who oversee homogeneous units participate in a slightly higher number of strategic activities.

The DowntownULibrary middle manager with the 42% expectations consensus ratio is the exemplar in this study. This number indicates the highest level of consensus of expectations among

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[1]The significance of this difference cannot be tested with so few participants.

the senior manager, the middle manager, and the two direct reports. This middle manager reported extremely low role ambiguity and role conflict, has a unit that does homogeneous tasks, supervises classified staff, and is a seasoned professional with several years experience as a librarian and as a middle manager. This middle manager does not have regular unit meetings but meets with each direct report in weekly one-on-ones. The role set members are not located in an office suite, but have fairly close proximity within a large technical services work area where informal interactions are likely to occur. Of note, the DRs who participated are under age 30; one holds the MLIS while the other is in a library and information science degree program.

5.3   Time-in-position of the middle manager

Based on previous research, job experience moderates impact of role ambiguity and role conflict (Jackson & Schuler, 1985). Middle managers with little experience are more likely to report higher role ambiguity and role conflict, and middle managers with more job experience are likely to report low role ambiguity and lower role conflict. In this study, time-in-position had no statistically significant relationship with role ambiguity. Several MMs with 12 or fewer months in the position reported low ambiguity, two MMs with more than 36 months in the position expressed higher ambiguity, and two long-term MMs reported low ambiguity.

For the MMs in this study, time-in-position has no statistically significant relationship with expectations consensus, role ambiguity, nor with role conflict, nor with turnover intentions. There is a weak relationship (R = 0.56, p = .07) between time-in-position and the overall strategic activities score. While the statistical analyses showed no significant relationships among these variables, additional information gained through interviews, observations and document analysis provided context that suggested that organizational change and changes to their positions may have influenced the MMs' role ambiguity scores. For example, even though RuralULibrary MM2 has several years' experience as a middle manager, this position at RuralULibrary was newly created, and while the duties were articulated in the job description, they were in flux. Both RuralULibrary-MM3 and DowntownULibrary-MM1 were new to their positions, had worked in their libraries for several years, and their previous supervisors had also been promoted within the libraries and were continuing to mentor them. However, RuralULibrary-MM3 reported much higher role ambiguity than DowntownULibrary-MM1, possibly due to several mitigating factors: the heterogeneous nature of the units, several vacancies in the units (e.g., this MM retained responsibilities from the position

previously held), and the large amount of expectations being sent from direct reports. Conversely, DowntownULibrary-MM1, while also new to the position, took on the management of a homogeneous unit in which they had worked for several years, which had been subjected to little organizational change, and in which the direct reports had few expectations. This MM reported very low role ambiguity.

Two MMs from DowntownULibrary with long times-in-position reported low role ambiguity and role conflict; otherwise, they have very little in common. They oversee different kinds of units, the classifications of their direct reports are dissimilar, they have different senior managers, etc. Also, their units had not been subjected to any recent organizational shifts. DowntownULibrary-MM6 also has a long time-in-position but reported higher role ambiguity; this heterogeneous unit was involved in a structural change during data collection.

Incongruous expectations seem to impact some middle managers less than others; that is, some that are sent a broad range of expectations and perhaps should be vulnerable to role conflict and ambiguity instead report low ambiguity, conflict and turnover intentions scores. The data suggest that time-in-position has some influence on the middle manager's experience of role ambiguity (with the exceptions of RuralULibrary-MM1 and DowntownULibrary-MM3, who have short tenures but low ambiguity; but they also have homogenous units).

While study results showed no clear relationships among time-in-position, role ambiguity, role conflict and turnover intentions, as was found in previous research, time-in-position could be a moderating factor. In order to determine the relationships among these factors for academic library middle managers, a broader scale study must be undertaken. It would also be useful to examine the stability of the organizational unit and how that might contribute to the MM's lack of clarity about their role.

5.4   What "middle management" means

This section presents an overall bricolage of the middle manager in the academic library setting, based upon the expectations consensus expressed by participant role set members, the activities of the middle managers, and responsibilities articulated in organizational documents. The composite middle manager (see Figure 5.1) emphasizes these taxonomy dimensions: *Communicating Effectively*, *Technical Proficiency*, *Guiding, Directing & Motivating*, *Maintaining Relationships*, and *Coordinating Subordinates*. Included below are several quotations from the interviews that help to illustrate the

expectations that were expressed.
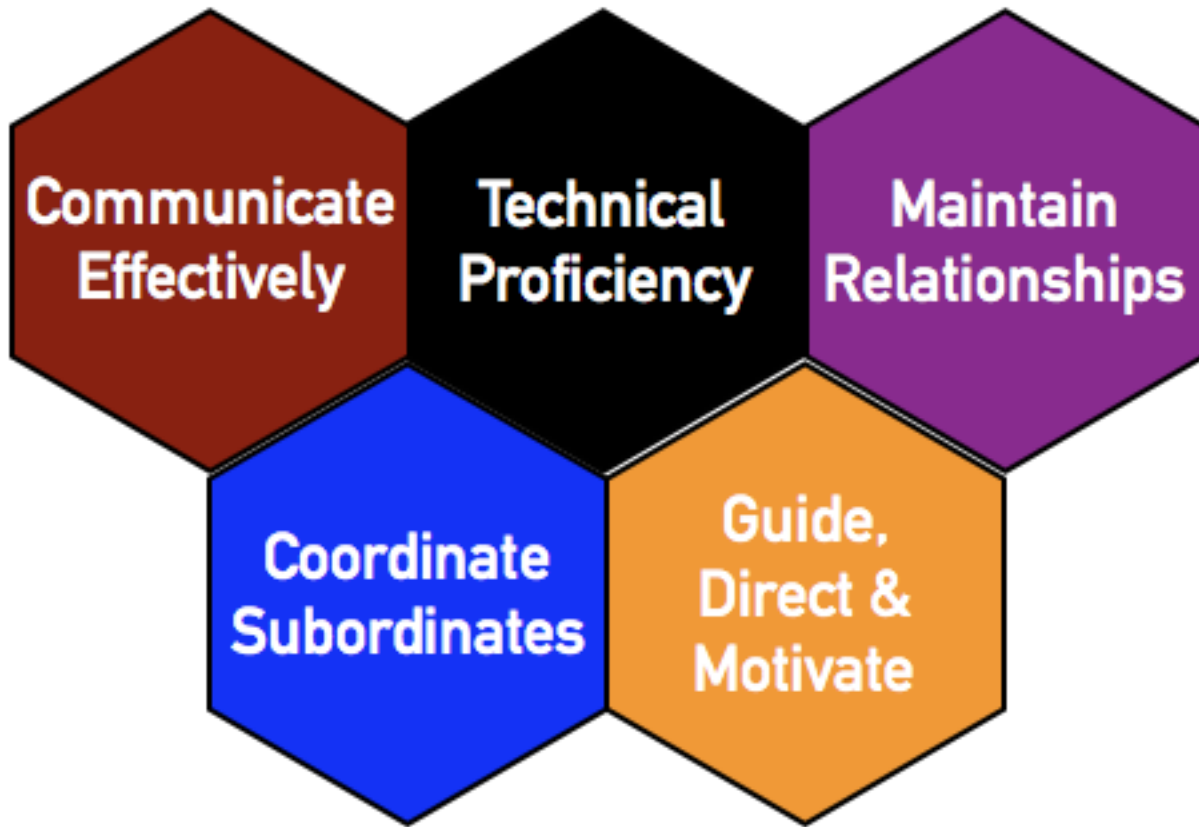
Figure 5.1: Composite Middle Manager

It is no surprise that middle managers are expected to communicate effectively. According to the language in the Taxonomy of Managerial Performance, used to code the data in this study, *Communicating Effectively* means communicating orally and in written form; keeping direct reports, senior managers and others informed; and obtaining and then passing on information to those who should know. Study participants expressed these kinds of expectations, but there were some nuances among the different role set members.

The middle managers in this study obtain and share a lot of information orally, indicated by their schedule of meetings, including one-on-ones and department meetings with their role set members. The DRs expect their MMs to maintain vertical communication: "Obviously a middle manager needs to communicate from the top down and the down to the top, both ways, two-way communication" (RuralULibrary-MM1-DR4), and "sharing and enforcing things that come from the top" (RuralULibrary-MM2-DR2). "As a listener, to see what we want and to talk to us about

what's coming down from higher administration and how that's gonna effect us" (RuralULibrary-MM1-DR5). These middle managers were described by their DRs as "conduit[s] for information" and "communicator[s] in chief". The MMs also recognized the importance of lateral communication in order to accomplish coordination and collaboration across the organization.

- ". . . I feel like the expectation is that I'm going to know what's going on with everybody and make sure that all those things are working in the organization and everybody is informed . . ." (RuralULibrary-MM1).

- "Part of my role is to make sure that I keep contact going with the other departments so if we're doing something within our department that I feel we need to bring other people in, then I sort of head that up, if necessary" (DowntownULibrary-MM3).

- "As far as my peers, I think there is some expectation that I communicate, particularly as it relates to staffing the public service areas. We communicate any ins, outs, vacations, time off, who's covering for whom. Because it's very important, if you expect somebody to be there that might change how you'd handle or approach your own situation. That goes both ways. I expect them to tell me when they're going to have a shortage so that we can coordinate. I think it's making sure that we work harmoniously together to fulfill the goals of the larger division" (DowntownULibrary-MM5).

- "When things happen here that I think should go up, then I take them up." [For example, a branch library patron accused of criminal behavior was found to have been acting similarly at the main library.] (DowntownULibrary-MM7 (the branch manager)).

Another aspect of communication that was emphasized by MMs was active listening and appearing engaged. "They also really want me to hear their feedback. . . But a lot of times they just want to be heard. . . there's kind of an emotional intelligence you need to have when you're a manager" (DowntownULibrary-MM3). "I also certainly have the other side of that, where I am required to be involved in committees and that type of thing, and then report anything that I think needs to be escalated to my boss" (UrbanULibrary-MM1).

MMs reported needing to be accessible and responsive. "I don't think it would go over well if I were seen as somebody who spends all the time camped out in my office with the door closed,"

says RuralULibrary-MM2, who is also concerned about availability due to a remote office location: "That's a serious issue. I try to get out and walk around but it's not the same as being up there." MMs demonstrate responsiveness through "prompt replies to emails, voicemails, leave away messages when I'm away from the office, be prompt at meetings, attend meetings that I should be at" (DowntownULibrary-MM2).

Additional communication aspects and mechanisms were reflected in the data. MMs expressed being a visible spokesperson, keeping others informed, and making expectations clear as specific communication intentions. MMs also communicate in written form, including formal evaluations; email communication was not examined in this study but was given as an example of middle manager communication by several participants.

As was reported earlier, only half of the the senior managers expressed *Communicating effectively* as an expectation, and those who did talked very little about specific aspects of communication.

The *Guiding, Directing & Motivating* dimension is closely related to the concept of leadership, and again, it is not surprising that middle managers would be expected to direct the work of the employees in their departments and to motivate them to better performance. When middle managers guide, direct and motivate subordinates it means they provide supervision and performance review: they evaluate the quality of job performance and provide recognition, encouragement, and constructive criticism; they help set goals and maintain performance standards and monitor performance; and they meet periodically with the employee to review performance against standards, to discuss performance results, and to provide counsel on topics such as strengths and weaknesses.

Middle managers and direct reports in this study expressed this expectation frequently, giving several specific examples. First of all, they expect MMs to evaluate job performance, providing recognition, encouragement, and constructive criticism. Related activities were found in the MMs' calendars and confirmed throughout the interviews. During the calendar data collection period, many of the participant MMs were conducting evaluations of their DRs, so there were several related calendar entries. Two MMs described the frequent entries in their calendars as observations of teaching and other evaluation-related meetings. "Everybody has two observations per year; starting this year, I do one for everyone. So I observed a whole mess of people teaching and people observed me as well" (RuralULibrary-MM1). RuralULibrary-MM3 conducts 360-degree evaluations, so she also met with RuralULibrary-MM3-DR1's staff direct reports to get their feedback.

Several DRs acknowledged their MMs' responsibilities related to evaluating job performance. "Feedback on job performance is a super important role" (RuralULibrary-MM1-DR5). Additional comments from DRs included "providing me with constructive criticism" (RuralULibrary-MM3-DR1) and "to make me aware of areas where I'm failing" (RuralULibrary-MM3-DR1).

As a part of *Guiding, Directing & Motivating*, MMs are expected to help set goals, maintain performance standards and monitor performance. These factors were particularly noted by respondents involved in the tenure and promotion process and MMs who supervise students.

- "[My MM helps with the] review process for the librarians. You're helping people move forward and therefore you're helping the department move forward" (RuralULibrary-MM1-DR5).

- "Helping set the goals of individuals in the department, checking up with them to make sure it's getting followed through" (DowntownULibrary-MM3).

- "Giving guidance to the people who are on tenure-track, giving honest feedback about what's happening" (RuralULibrary-MM1-DR2).

- "In personnel issues, probably, a lot of this is because I'm pretty new to the hiring process, the disciplinary process, those sorts of things" (RuralULibrary-MM2-DR2).

- Meeting with other Access Services staff to discuss an ILL student employee issue (UrbanULibrary-MM1).

- Addressing a productivity problem (DowntownULibrary-MM7).

MMs also meet periodically with the employee to review performance against standards, to discuss performance results, and to counsel on strengths and weaknesses. Respondents specifically mentioned that mentorship (RuralULibrary-MM2-DR2) and addressing employee behavior (DowntownULibrary-MM2) occur during these periodic meetings. One astute DR noted that the MM "meets with us all individually, and there's nothing really about that in [the job description]" (RuralULibrary-MM1-DR4).

Technical Proficiency is about keeping up-to-date technically and solving technical problems, possessing sufficient technical job knowledge to perform effectively in one own's specialty, and providing technical advice to others in the organization. As previously reported, many LIS middle

managers retain some technical or subject area-specific duties (Lynch, 1976; Drucker, 1976; Sullivan, 1992). In libraries and secondary schools, middle managers are often expected to have technical expertise, and the level of respect and credibility they garner may be related to their technical and professional competence, knowledge and prowess (Lynch, 1976; Gurr & Drysdale, 2013). The data collected and interpreted in this study supports the idea that academic library middle managers are expected to maintain technical proficiency. Not only was this expectation expressed during the interviews, it was also reflected in the calendar entries where MMs were "filling in" â in order to do so, they had to be up-to-date on the functional tasks of their units:

"People in my department I think expect me to be a skilled reference librarian and instructor. That was really critical, it was a HUGE part of the questions they asked me when I interviewed . . . They made a really big deal about it so it was very clear to me. And I was thrilled because that's what I did for the last 10 years. So I was very excited about that because that's one of my passions. But it was clearly very important, they wanted somebody who was skilled at the sort of where the rubber meets the road stuff, somebody who could come out on the desk or teach class when we're short-staffed. And not have it be a problem. So yeah, I do more of that perhaps than I thought" (RuralULibrary-MM1).

A RuralULibrary-MM1 direct report corroborated this sentiment and behavior: They "need to be able to do the day-to-day so that you know what's going on. [Their] desk is right behind the [reference] desk, [they] definitely do some of the reference desk service hours. I'm actually in charge of scheduling that and they always ask for some. I give them less" (RuralULibrary-MM1-DR3).

"You don't want someone who hasn't done the job in forever, or who couldn't do the job. Do you really want someone as head of reference who can't go out on the reference desk and work questions. Who isn't up with whatever technologies - old and new - you want that person to be able to figure out. I've known too many managers in the past, in different places, who could not do the jobs. I'm not saying the dean should be able to catalog or load things or do fines or whatever. But for the middle manager, the person who is closest to you, I really think they need to be able to also do the same things they're asking other folks to do, and not see it as either beneath them or, almost as bad,

just incapable of it. It curries a lot of respect, if I can believe that the person who is my manager is expert at their job or expert at our job" (RuralULibrary-MM1).

Maintaining expertise in a number of areas is important for the branch manager: "To me, I don't think there's anyone at [the main library] who has to have the breadth of knowledge and has to oversee and coordinate the breadth of activities that I do here. And then, not only that, there's a [performing arts] specialty, there's a subject specialty on top of that, which they do not necessarily, there are some over there that have a subject specialty, but, in the reference department. I'm just stating facts and hopefully they speak for themselves" (DowntownULibrary-MM7).

The study DRs also expect their MMs to have expertise in functional areas, so they may go to them for guidance and problem solving when they encounter complex situations. "So I don't expect my supervisor to be knowledgeable in all the areas, you cannot be, but nonetheless it would be somebody I would look up to in some ways. Like go to for ideas or if I'm having trouble. So that person should be open enough or make me feel welcome enough to approach that person with those problems" (RuralULibrary-MM3-DR1).

And several MMs expressed their readiness to provide guidance in or take over difficult situations. "To handle difficult patrons, to handle difficult situations or just complex ones that are beyond what they know how to do. I still process ILL requests that are beyond what the ILL borrowing manager can do, so I'm still involved in that kind of daily processing at times. So, there's that expectation from her to be able to help with that kind of situation, too" (DowntownULibrary-MM2).

Coordinating Subordinates involves coordinating functional work groups within the larger organizational unit and negotiation with others to accomplish optimal utilization of organizational resources. It is not surprising to see this dimension has support from all of the data sources. This expectation, along with *Communicating Effectively*, is a cog-like function of the middle manager; it involves coordinating human and other resources to get the job done and properly utilizing personnel and other resources to increase unit and organizational effectiveness.

"My supervisor expects me to keep my department running smoothly and to inform [them] when [they] need to be informed of problems or if people need things" (DowntownULibrary-MM4).

"And that more importantly, that I make sure that they have the tools to do their job. Be it computers, office supplies, appropriate work space. And I've had to solve a lot of those problems

related to those types of issues, everything from temperature, to flooding water coming through the walls" (DowntownULibrary-MM5).

Several study MMs stressed the importance of understanding the interdependence of library units and how their units' functions must be coordinated with the other units' functions, as is articulated here:

"I guess they would want me to have all of my department's functions running well. That's what I want of them, I want them to have their departments running well. We are interdependent upon each other. We in circulation rely upon what cataloging and acquisitions does. ILL is very reliant upon what electronic resources do and cataloging does. So, I would expect that of them, so I'm sure they expect us to be able to circulate the materials that they buy and catalog, to refer people to reference or research and instruction services as needed. I'm not really sure what else they would expect of me beyond what I've already said about being prompt and courteous and that kind of thing" (DowntownULibrary-MM2).

Finally, several MMs talked about the need to coordinate singular functions that are distributed across multiple library units. For example, circulation standards of practice need to be consistent across the branch and main library locations, and because collection development is distributed across multiple positions, that activity must be coordinated.

Maintaining Relationships has to do with consideration and interpersonal relations: showing respect for others and maintaining smooth working relationships, and maintaining a smooth running work unit that functions with minimal conflict and disruption. Both the presence and absence of this skill was expressed by study participants, especially direct reports who felt that it was important that their middle managers know how to resolve conflict and show appreciation, even if these middle managers weren't currently doing so. Most middle managers did not express this expectation or understanding of their role, although half the DRs did and the department head documents stressed it. Also, eight out of 11 MM calendars had entries related to *Maintaining Relationships*, including training for interpersonal relations and conflict resolution. This appears to be an important concern for DRs and at the organizational level, even though the middle managers and to some extent the SMs did not express it frequently as an expectation.

Several MMs mentioned that they take part in departmental, cross-library, and external social and professional events such as student employee appreciation parties, retirement gatherings, and conferences; they often attend these events to support their DRs (and peers) who are being honored or who are giving presentations. These kinds of events appeared in multiple MM calendars, and were considered appropriate congratulatory activities following successful and effective *Training, Coaching, & Developing* and *Guiding, Directing & Motivating* efforts with their DRs. MMs also gave specific examples of listening and working to smooth over conflict. Multiple quotes from RuralULibrary participants illustrate this dimension.

"Listening to people when they have conflict and doing what I can to mediate that conflict. And this is not a conflict-rich environment, but it still happens. With this many people, things happen, almost every day, little things happen! So I think that's critically important because I don't ever want people to feel like they can't come to me and tell me if they have a concern or a problem because they think that my opinion might outweigh their opinion. I want them to sort of feel like I'm a blank slate. I don't know if that's the best approach yet, I'm new at this. But I feel like it's working pretty well" (RuralULibrary-MM1).

This sentiment was corroborated by multiple DRs in the unit:

"Yeah, and I would say that [they're] definitely a facilitator. You know, listens to our concerns and ideas and they provide their perspective on it, very respectfully. They don't, you know, they're not a dictator or a micromanager. But they're interested in everything, even the little things" (RuralULibrary-MM1-DR3). "A sympathetic ear for, or sounding board for issues that individuals in the department are dealing with. Not necessarily a problem solver in that sense but somebody to listen to frustrations and maybe provide some guidance, but mostly a sounding board" (RuralULibrary-MM1-DR5).

[I have to be] "an omsbudsperson, a peace-keeper almost. I try really hard not to take sides, which caused me some conflict in the beginning, I struggled with that role" (RuralULibrary-MM1).

The exemplary middle manager, whose role set had the highest degree of expectations consensus, articulated her DRs' expectations this way, expressing the *Guiding, Directing & Motivating*, *Training, Coaching & Developing* and *Technical Proficiency* dimensions:

"I think what they look for is, when they have a question in the course of their daily work, if they're not sure what to do, something that's not routine or that could go either way and they're not sure how to handle it, they're looking for somebody to ask a question and have a discussion with and come to a decision about how to handle a particular item or a particular problem. They're looking for somebody who will indicate what they should be spending more time on. What the priorities are? What needs to get done sooner. Somebody to ensure that they have the training that they need to do the work that they need to get done. If there's something new that they need to get done, to make sure that they have the tools and the training to be able to do it" (DowntownULibrary-MM4).

The expectations that were expressed most frequently across all of these sites were *Communicating Effectively*, *Coordinating Subordinates*, *Technical Proficiency*, *Guiding, Directing & Motivating*, and *Maintaining Good Working Relationships*.

The activities found in most of the middle managers' calendars were *Representing the Organization*, "Collaborating", *Technical Proficiency*, *Staffing*, *Planning & Organizing*, *Guiding, Directing & Motivating*, *Maintaining Relationships*, *Coordinating Subordinates*, and "Filling in".

The responsibilities articulated across all of the organizational documents examined included *Guiding, Directing & Motivating* and *Administration & Paperwork*. Most of the documents included *Planning & Organizing, Training, Coaching & Developing, Technical Proficiency, Staffing, Monitoring & Controlling*, and *Collecting & Interpreting Data*. *Communicating Effectively* and *Maintaining Relationships* appeared in both of the department heads documents, perhaps suggesting that these activities are universally important for middle managers in DowntownULibrary and RuralULibrary.

The data suggest certain incongruence in terms of participant-expressed and document-articulated expectations when compared to the actual activities that the middle managers perform. For example, *Planning & Organizing, Administration & Paperwork* and *Staffing* were found in almost all of the organizational documents and middle manager calendars, but hardly garnered mentions from the participants, even the middle managers themselves. Upon examining the MM's job description, one astute DR noted a lack of specificity in supervision responsibilities: "It's funny that it doesn't say anything about supervising eight librarians, which is a big part of [their] job [chuckle]. 'To lead

its Research and Instruction Department' but it doesn't specifically say, I mean a big part of her job is personnel management, it's the [annual evaluations], the [tenure review process]. She meets with us all individually, and there's nothing really about that in here." Two of the most egregious inconsistencies are *Representing the Organization* and "collaborating", both of which were found in all of the middle managers' calendars, yet were expressed only by 10% and 7% (respectively) of the respondents; *Representing the Organization* was found in only one and "collaborating" in none of the department heads documents. One potential conclusion is that middle managers are spending a lot of time on activities that are not expected.

But that is not a logical conclusion. A more salient one is that most organizations and employees don't understand what behaviors and activities middle managers perform in order to accomplish the overall goal of managing their departments. For example, many assume it is the role of the CEO or University Librarian to represent the library to external entities. What has been made clear by examining the middle managers' calendars is that they all spend time representing the library, and they collaborate with a wide range of people outside of their departments. Even for middle managers with faculty status, whose roles require service to the university and the profession, *Representing the Organization* goes beyond participating in order to, for example, keep the work of the organization (or association) going. In many cases it includes memberships in working groups strictly due to the MMs' position and/or expertise, and their abilities to articulate the library's capabilities and concerns. For example, RuralULibrary-MM2 serves on the campus IT group not only to take information back to the library, but is also expected to communicate library capabilities and concerns to the campus IT group. This is somewhat different from a library employee who volunteers to be on a campus-wide committee such as an athletics committee; this is important service but it is not required based on the library employee's position or expertise. One thing that is not clear is that these activities may come down to choices â that some middle managers choose to participate in these activities even though the expectation has not been articulated in official documentation. It is also likely that many expectations are implicit and not written down.

5.5 Impact of this study

5.5.1 Forming the middle management role

The meaning of the middle manager role is developed through the interplay of organizational documents (job descriptions, department head documents) and formal processes (evaluation, tenure and promotion), informal and formal communications with senior managers, and day-to-day work and interactions with direct reports. Therefore, even though this study has revealed some common academic library middle manager competencies, specific expectations and understanding of the middle manager role is bound to be organization-specific and dependent upon employees' previous experiences and training. If expectations are based on perception, the origination of the understanding of the role is important in describing the meaning of middle manager. A person's perception of the role is constructed through their education and their previous social interactions. This raises implications for how we might impose the meaning of middle manager upon library employees and build greater consensus about the role expectations. In this context, it is incumbent upon senior level administrators to be clear about the expectations and responsibilities of the middle management positions in the organization, to give constructive feedback on performance, and to provide training and professional development opportunities. This in turn may influence the middle manager's experience of role conflict and role ambiguity. While this study did not focus on middle manager performance, it would be useful to gather data about which role senders' sent expectations are received by the MMs and thereby exert the most influence. It is likely that, as evaluators, senior level managers exert the most influence over the middle managers' behaviors and performance; however, in organizations that have adopted a 360-degree-type evaluation approach, direct reports' feedback on their middle managers' performance is also taken into account. It would also be useful to understand how the MMs negotiate the incongruent expectations from their variety of role senders. Especially since the MMs in this study reported low overall role ambiguity, role conflict and turnover intentions, it would be useful to know how they have managed the competing expectations and what coping strategies they have honed.

One direct report participant who had previously served as the department head reflected on how that experience was helpful:

"It was huge. I think I'm a better colleague now, I'm hopefully a better employee now,

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because yeah, you get to see how the sausage is made in many ways. What I missed and why I went back [to the faculty] was that I missed the day-to-day librarian stuff. Because you really become a manager and I reached the moment where I either go forward or you go back and I wasn't ready to go forward at this point in my career, so. I missed working with students everyday and I missed, yeah, just the fun librarian stuff, you know? Ordering stuff, answering reference questions, teaching, so. I appreciate the joy in my job that even little stuff like working on libguides â I was just giddy back here working on libguides. Just even being able to finish a thought, because for four years, didn't finish a thought, didn't finish a sentence. I would find 10 draft emails in my draft folder cause I would get interrupted so many times during the day, you know, so. And that's where the better employee thing comes in, I'm very cognizant about interrupting [my middle manager]. I try not to inundate them with emails or requests. When I want something and it springs into my head, I think, do I really want this? Should I ask for this now? That kind of thing. I'm more aware of what it's like to be in their seat. And it's fading after a year â I'me getting back into being a little more selfish. But I'm trying to remember. But you forget what that's like" (RuralULibrary-MM1-DR2).

This direct report's experience suggests that rotating department head responsibilities, similar to chairs of academic departments, might be constructive, allowing various faculty members to gain administrative and managerial experience which increases their understanding of the role and might influence their expectations.

5.5.2 LIS education

Confirming earlier reports about LIS graduate program management course utility (Bailey, 1981; Rooney, 2010), none of the MMs in this study mentioned library or information school management courses as helping them learn the MM role, and only one library faculty member at DowntownULibrary mentioned library school discussions when asked about learning the MM role. Considering that the majority of participants hold the MLS (including many classified staff members) and presumably completed a required management course (77% of Rooney's middle managers completed one management course while in library school (Rooney, 2010)), this may have implications for library and information science curricula. At issue is the efficacy of the required

management courses in LIS programs. First of all, management courses may not address the specific needs of frontline or middle managers, for example, the competencies identified in this study. Second, is the LIS program setting appropriate for learning and retaining applicable managerial concepts that will be used by the students much later. A third consideration is, perhaps MMs need to learn and apply these concepts when or as needed. Once tapped to advance to the next level, MMs tend to start seeking out professional development and training opportunities that are relevant to the specific responsibilities they now have. Newly appointed middle managers/department heads seek formal training through management workshops or seminars (Bailey, 1981; Rooney, 2010) and reported here. At that point, library school coursework in management may be a distant memory, having covered content the new supervisor has not had to think about in years. This situation suggests that rather than requiring a management course during the MLS, library and information schools could provide continuing education courses that budding managers could enroll in on an as-needed basis. Library associations and other management or training organizations already provide this type of training. One obvious hurdle to this suggestion of changing library school curricula is the ALA accreditation standards, which suggest that the curriculum encompass management of human and information resources. Also, ALA's Core Competencies of Librarianship indicate administration and management as basic knowledge of LIS program graduates. Management courses also prepare graduates to work in managed organizations and to understand organizational behavior. Library and information schools could continue to require a management course for the degree while also building continuing education programs that give practicing librarians further options for developing their managerial skills.

5.5.3 Theoretical concepts

Organizational Role Theory

This study employed organizational role theory (ORT) to examine the academic library middle manager role. Several ORT concepts were explored in the academic library context: consensus, role-taking, and role conflict.

Consensus occurs when the organization and the incumbent agree (Day, 2011; Katz & Kahn, 1966). According to ORT, position behaviors and expectations are pre-planned based on organizational objectives and they are articulated in organizational documents (Biddle, 1986; Katz & Kahn, 1966). The organizational documents analyzed in this study emphasize these middle manager behavioral

expectations: *Guiding, Directing & Motivating; Administration & Paperwork; Planning & Organizing; Training, Coaching & Developing; Staffing; Monitoring & Controlling; Collecting & Interpreting Data; Communicating Effectively;* and *Maintaining Relationships.*

Due to the social interplay involved in organizational life, it seems clear that various organizational actors have an influence on role expectations, and that to achieve consensus the MM's role set members' expectations must also be considered. Based on those role set member expectations, there is no single universal activity or behavior that defines "middle manager"; however, there is a high level of agreement centered around these expectations: *Communicating Effectively, Technical Proficiency, Guiding, Directing & Motivating, Coordinating Subordinates*, and *Maintaining Relationships* and these may help us develop an understanding of the ideal middle manager role. Taken together, organizational documents and role set member expectations agree that these are middle manager behaviors: *Guiding, Directing & Motivating*; *Communicating Effectively*; and *Maintaining Relationships*; this leaves an extensive list of behaviors and activities upon which there is little consensus. This also suggests few normative expectations. It is clear from the findings that norms for the expectations of the middle manager position vary among the middle manager's role set, the organizational documents, and the middle managers' activities, supporting Biddle's assertion that the assumption of normative expectations within an organizational context is a faulty one.

Role-taking refers to the accuracy and sophistication with which a person perceives the expectations of the role senders. In the absence of normative expectations, role-taking becomes more complex. The variation in expectations may be due to the fact that employees learn the role through different mechanisms: through interactions with other role set members, through the delineation of duties in organizational documents, or even through training and education. As Robinson suggested, the models of ministry taught in seminary or articulated in pastoral theology may differ from the models encountered by individuals in specific congregations; newly trained pastors perceive their role based upon training, whereas their new congregants may have a different set of expectations based on their experiences. Likewise, middle managers in academic libraries may face similar circumstances in that the mental models for middle managers vary among the persons in their role set.

One clear finding in this study is that participants learned the middle manager role through direct relationships with role set members. This information was gained both explicitly through interview responses and implicitly due to the "homegrown" way in which professionals advanced

through the organization and in turn became middle managers and senior managers who interact with and send role expectations to their direct reports. The social interplay between senior and middle managers, and between direct reports and middle managers, seems to be the most influential method by which the direct report and middle manager participants learned the middle manager role. This makes it clear that communication throughout the organization about the middle manager's role is more effective than any other mechanism.

And perhaps the implicit messages have a strong influence on the middle managers' behaviors and activities. This may explain the discrepancies between the coded activities found in the MMs' calendars and their role set members' coded expectations. So much of what MMs are doing and are expected to do is not known or seen by their DRs (and in some cases not known or seen by their SMs). The MMs act based on their interpretation of the objectives articulated in organizational documents. Their role-taking is an amalgam of their role set members' expectations, organizational documents' dictums, and their own perceptions of what needs to get done. The missing piece here is what influences the MMs the most. Does one role sender exert more influence than another? In expressing their expectations of the middle manager role, classified staff direct reports had more expectations in common with their middle managers than any other role set members, suggesting greater harmony in their understanding of the role. But it could also be that the middle managers have a more transactional relationship with their classified staff direct reports, they are explicit with these DRs about their duties, and they want these DRs to have clarity about their role. Perhaps the middle managers feel that their faculty-level direct reports don't require that level of clarity, that their relationships with faculty are peer-based and more transformational, and that their interactions with faculty are based on individual need rather than organizational objectives. This idea may be related to Honea's musings about professional standards and goals vs. managerial ones. It would be interesting to create a research project that focused on this aspect.

The underlying assumption of Katz and Kahn's (1966) role episode model that role conflict will arise if the expectations are not consensual does not hold in this study; there was a great deal of variation in the role conflict scores of those middle managers whose role set members expressed diverse expectations of the role. There were a couple of cases where the middle manager's role set had a highly diverse set of expectations and the middle manager reported higher role conflict scores, and there were a couple of cases in which the middle manager's role set expressed a high level of

agreement and the middle manager reported lower role conflict scores; however, there were also cases in which the role set members had a widely diverse set of expectations but the middle manager reported low role conflict scores. Thus the role set members' behaviors did not conform to this assumption of the role episode.

Findings from the earlier-reported pilot study, from this study, and from role theory literature suggest that restructuring might be related to the MM's experience of role ambiguity. The MM who reported the highest role ambiguity score had held a newly-created position for two years, and their office was also located remotely from the DRs and the SM. This ambiguity occurred despite this middle manager's long experience at the middle manager level. The second-highest ambiguity score was from a MM who had only held the position for a few months. The third-highest ambiguity score was reported by another long-term MM whose department was in discussions about changing reporting structure. So, two participating MMs who were subjected to restructuring also reported higher than average role ambiguity. The irony here is that middle managers are vital during an organization's restructuring (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1996) or other change (Kanter, 1986), but middle managers who are themselves in new or changing positions may experience role ambiguity. In particular, they may be uncertain about how their new positions fit into the overall organizational strategy. Clear expectations and feedback from senior managers will help reduce role ambiguity in these situations.

According to the literature, middle managers have boundary-spanning positions and because of that they experience greater role conflict. There were two boundary-spanning middle managers in this study; one reported role conflict while the other did not.

Strategic roles

Floyd and Wooldridge's strategic roles framework (1996) was employed to examine the extent of academic library middle managers' participation in strategic activities and to explore the connection between strategic activities and role conflict, role ambiguity, and turnover intentions. The middle managers' responses to the strategic activities questionnaire were analyzed to determine their level of participation in four strategic middle management roles â *Championing strategic alternatives*, *Synthesizing information*, *Facilitating adaptability*, and *Implementing deliberate strategy*â plus their overall strategic activities score. Based on a mean score of 3.4 on a scale of 1 = Never to 5 = Frequently, the academic library middle managers in this study participate in strategic activities

"occasionally"; those who reported higher levels of strategic activities experience lower role ambiguity.

A contentious issue in the literature and among practitioners is the involvement of middle managers in strategy formation as well as strategy implementation. It is basically agreed upon that middle managers implement the strategic directions formulated by top management (Beck & Plowman, 2009), but they might also be uniquely positioned to alter and develop strategy due to their operational knowledge, their exposure to internal and external stakeholders, and their upward and downward influences on the organization. One must look at the component scores on the strategic middle management roles scale in order to examine this distinction.

The highest mean component score is 3.75 for *Implementing deliberate strategy*, a downward-influence, integrative role. Nine study MMs indicated that they implement deliberate strategy more often than occasionally (five MMs do so regularly or more often). Based on the psychometric scale, these activities include monitoring activities to support top management objectives, translating goals into action plans, translating goals into individual objectives, and selling top management initiatives to subordinates (See **??** for the full questionnaire).

Championing strategic alternatives and *Facilitating adaptability* are divergent strategic components that indicate middle managers' upward and downward influence (respectively) on senior management's strategy formation and the organization's adaptations of strategy during formation and implementation. This study's middle managers might be considered "strategic champions" due to their high average on the *Championing strategic alternatives* component. All study MMs but one do these activities "occasionally" or more frequently (three report regularly or more often). Hallmarks of a strategic champion (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1996) include:

- intimate involvement with operations
- deep understanding of strategic logic
- prudent list taking
- astute political sensitivity

The activities related to *Championing strategic alternatives* include justifying and defining new programs, evaluating the merits of new proposals, searching for new opportunities, and proposing programs or projects to higher level managers.

Despite their potential for being strategic champions, the MMs in this study are extremely low

at *Facilitating adaptability.* None of them regularly participate in related activities, which include encouraging informal discussion and information sharing, relaxing regulations to get new projects started, "buying time" for experimental programs, locating and providing resources for trial projects, and providing a safe haven for experimental programs. [2] This suggests that they do not feel independent and empowered to encourage experimentation among their direct reports that might influence strategy formation, even during implementation.

Although these middle managers regularly implement deliberate strategy, translate organizational strategy and goals into action plans and individual objectives, and sell top management initiatives to their direct reports, they do not encourage their direct reports to experiment to better enable the change the senior managers actually want to see. Academic library functional departments might be more agile and proactive in an environment that supported prototypes and pilot projects.

The academic library middle managers in this study participate in strategic activities occasionally, and that participation is focused on implementation; the potential for their participation in strategy formation is high due to the evidence of "collaborating" and *Representing the Organization* found in their calendars.

Due to the collaborative nature of their jobs, these MMs are constantly exposed to external role senders (e.g., clients, teaching faculty, vendors) from whom they gain information that can drive and influence strategic direction. But from the responses, it appears that only three MMs are regularly doing this (six occasionally), based on the *Synthesizing information* component.

Previous research found middle manager participation in strategic activities to be positively related to role conflict and ambiguity (Floyd & Lane, 2000). In this study, the higher the middle managers' strategic activities score, the higher their role clarity. And, the more clarity about their roles, the lower their experience of role conflict. Because of small sample sizes, these results are not significant; but these relationships could be investigated in a larger-scale study of academic library middle managers.

Middle managers who participate in the components *Championing strategic alternatives* and

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[2]There could be an issue with terminology with this questionnaire, especially this section. In a few cases, the researcher was asked by the MM for clarification about the language used in these scale items. "Buying time" was particularly confusing, perhaps providing some indication that academic library middle managers are not familiar with basic managerial or business jargon.

Synthesizing information at a higher rate experience lower role ambiguity. This study found no correlations between strategic activity participation level and role conflict, contrary to what was found in earlier studies (Floyd & Lane, 2000; Madden, 2013) of middle managers.

Taxonomy of Managerial Performance

The Taxonomy of Managerial Performance (Borman & Brush, 1993) presents a useful framework for exploring the behaviors, activities, and competencies of middle managers in academic libraries. Despite its age, it remains relevant due to the timeless ways in which the scholars described the categories. Many of the department heads documents examined in this study employed similar language to articulate organizational objectives and middle manager behaviors. There were a few descriptors that needed to be added to capture the academic library middle managers' activities, and the results suggest that academic libraries might place more emphasis on certain dimensions in order to make their middle managers more effective.

Three terms were added to the study's coding scheme in order to capture behaviors and activities that were not explicitly articulated in the Taxonomy of Managerial Performance: "Collaborating", "Filling In", and "Modeling Behavior". All of the academic library middle managers in this study had entries in their calendars that fit the "collaborating" category, and several of their interview responses indicated that they were expected to collaborate with individuals outside of their units to achieve work objectives. "Filling In" was found in more than half of the academic library middle managers' calendars; it was expressed by several middle managers and many direct reports as an expectation. The middle managers filled in for vacant positions in their own units and for their direct reports occasionally (e.g., reference desk shift).

"Filling In" is interpreted as a significant finding because it suggests that the middle managers are keeping up their technical proficiency in order to fill in. For example, RuralULibrary-MM3, after having been promoted to middle manager from an electronic resources position, maintained the e-resources responsibilities until a new e-resources librarian could be hired. The heads of reference who filled in for instruction librarians needed to keep up with related competencies. "Modeling Behavior" came up in several RuralULibrary participants' interview responses. Their senior manager models behaviors and the middle managers follow suit, almost to the point of this being an organizational value. This behavior is tied closely to the concept of sensegiving, and it was observed in all of the study sites.

The Taxonomy dimension *Representing the Organization* was found in every middle manager's calendar, yet it was not expressed much if at all by the participants. This finding demonstrates that academic library administrators should acknowledge this behavior and perhaps place more emphasis on it in organizational documents.

Limitations   This naturalistic study was designed as an exploratory examination of the behaviors and activities that make up the academic library middle manager role, based on the expectations of the middle managers' role set members, organizational documents, and observations of the middle managers' work environments. The multiple case study also examined the middle managers' experiences of role ambiguity, role conflict, strategic activities, and turnover intentions using existing psychometric scales. The result is a rich and intensive bricolage of the middle manager role in academic libraries that presents a foundation and agenda for further study and research.

The conclusions found in this study are necessarily bounded by the methods employed. Gaining unfettered access to organizations was a complex challenge, complicated by policies, ethics, personalities and interpersonal factors. One enormous impact on the results is that they only apply to academic libraries with faculty-status librarians, as those were the libraries with the highest and broadest participation level. This was not intended but must be acknowledged as a limitation. There is some confidence in the results due to the high percentage of employees within RuralULibrary and DowntownULibrary who participated and that the participants represented a wide range of functional library units.

The data gathering methods employed allowed deep insights about these specific cases and sites and the academic library context, and will inform future research into academic library middle manager behaviors. Using interviews to ask participants what they expected of middle managers, without referring to existing lists, meant that they had to think of the behaviors and activities on their own and use their own vocabulary, which then had to be coded using the Taxonomy of Managerial Performance. It is possible that, if given the list of Taxonomy dimensions, participants might have chosen different terms or more terms or fewer terms. However, this more naturalistic paradigm was chosen in order to see what meanings of middle management and other themes emerged, and to triangulate the data to gain a holistic overview of the context. If participants had been given a list from which to choose middle management expectations, the three added dimensions

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("collaborating", "filling in" and "modeling behavior") may not have emerged. And, it would have been difficult to gather information about informal interactions and proximity of offices without going on site to observe; these observations helped verify and explicate interview responses and calendar entries and helped confirm coding decisions.

Future research   Understanding middle management in the academic library context continues to be an important problem. This study lays the conceptual groundwork for further research that will codify and describe middle manager behaviors and work toward examining middle managers' contributions to organizational effectiveness.

This study identified the meanings of middle management in academic libraries where librarians have faculty status. In order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of middle management across the entire spectrum of academic libraries, a broader study that includes library middle managers without faculty status would be useful. The multi-methods approach used in this study would be appropriate, although it is complex and time-intensive. One approach that extends this research involves re-writing the salient interview questions and presenting the Taxonomy dimensions in questionnaire format, then administering the newly-designed questionnaire to a broad range of academic librarians. Rather than ask an open-ended question about middle manager expectations, role set members would choose expectations from a list (the Taxonomy plus three added dimensions). Results might be quite different, as the presentation of activities may influence responses. Such methodological adjustments would provide additional ways to understand middle management.

So much of what middle managers do is unseen by their direct reports, and often by their senior managers. And, because most libraries are not revenue-generating entities, drawing connections to outcomes is not straightforward. It can be difficult to articulate many of these hidden activities, but some of them may be necessary in creating productive, safe, and effective work environments. In order to gain an understanding of the sensemaking and sensegiving behaviors that contribute to a positive work environment where the organization's values are enacted, in-situ observations and further calendar-activity analysis of middle managers in award-winning libraries might be an effective approach. This approach might uncover specific middle manager contributions to organizational effectiveness and support of individual professionals in their work units (Smith et al., 2010). Examples of awards include ACRL's Excellence in Academic Libraries Award, ALA's

Emerging Leaders Program, and Library Journal's Movers & Shakers. Understanding this aspect of the job would lead to better lists of competencies and personality characteristics for middle manager positions. For example, how do middle managers maintain relationships? What are middle managers doing to help their direct reports make sense of organizational policies and change? How do middle managers communicate the values of the organization to their departments and to external stakeholders? Answering these questions would connect middle manager activities to organizational outcomes.

This study reported the role conflict, role ambiguity, turnover intentions, and strategic activities of a small sample of academic library middle managers. The middle managers in this study reported low role conflict, role ambiguity, and turnover intentions, and on average, they participate in strategic activities occasionally. Our understanding of academic library middle managers' experiences with these phenomena would be greatly expanded by administering the existing role conflict and ambiguity, turnover intentions, and strategic activities questionnaire to a broad sample of academic library middle managers, including those without faculty status. In addition, the role ambiguity and conflict, turnover intentions, and strategic activities questionnaire used in this study could be administered to academic library middle managers from award-winning libraries to try to determine if there is a relationship between these phenomena and the organization's performance and effectiveness.

Once the meanings (or criteria) of middle management are established, we can focus on the evaluation of an individual middle manager's success and/or effectiveness. Because we can rarely use revenue levels as an indicator, we must use surrogates for success. The success of individual middle managers might be assessed by examining their annual evaluations, but this only gives us one person's (the evaluator's) opinion about the middle manager's performance. A different approach would be to look at it from an organizational perspective. To take the current research further, one could create a holistic view of the organization's performance and the middle manager's role in it through this process:

1. Examine the documents that indicate the organization's values, mission, and criteria for performance for middle managers (e.g., job descriptions, department heads documents).

2. Determine how/if the middle managers are effectively enacting these values and performing the articulated behaviors and activities through an examination of their annual performance

evaluations (e.g., are the middle managers being judged by the criteria articulated in the organization documents?).

3. Examine the outcomes of each middle manager's department and of the library overall.

Perhaps, as Katz and Kahn (1966) asserted, a complete study of an organization would require that each position be treated as focal, and one could design a study to determine each position's contributions to the organization's goals and values. This would require a thorough job analysis, and in many states, the jobs classification scheme would be a starting point.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusions

This study on the middle manager role in academic libraries increases our understanding of the role and contributes to the existing LIS, management, and social psychology literatures by providing empirical evidence, evaluating relevant theoretical claims, and suggesting professional and practice-based enhancements. This study adds to the empirical evidence of middle manager behaviors and expectations in academic libraries. Within LIS, the professional literature expresses practitioner concerns about middle management job responsibilities and competencies. Although many library middle managers have contributed tips and guidelines based upon their own experiences, this study describes the roles of MMs through a holistic examination of the organizational actors and documents that define these roles. This study identified five consensus role expectations of the academic library middle manager: maintaining good working relationships, coordinating the work of the members of their departments, communicating effectively, maintaining technical proficiency, and leading (guiding, directing and motivating their direct reports).

In addition to the five consensus role expectations and their related behaviors, academic library middle managers engage in a variety of activities to achieve organizational goals. They spend time representing the organization to internal and external clients; they collaborate extensively with individuals outside of their own departments; they fill in during short-term or long-term vacancies in their departments; they spend time staffing their units and maintaining staff, which includes deciding on criteria for positions, recruiting, interviewing, selecting, hiring, transferring and promoting staff; and they plan and organize strategies and work for their units and contribute to these activities across the organization.

6.1 Empirical contributions

Katz and Kahn (1966) suggested that it would be useful to examine each position in an organization as a focal role, but they did not recommend any particular methods. This study treated the middle manager as focal and created a bricolage of middle manager meaning based on a

variety of data sources: observations, multiple perspective interviews, documents and questionnaires with psychometric scales. What emerged is a composite middle manager who is expected to have competence in five areas, but who engages in a variety of additional activities (based on calendar data). The middle manager role is not solely formed or learned through organizational documents or training, but primarily through social interplay. The various methods used in this study allowed for the triangulation of data so that findings could be verified. For example, frequency of meetings reported in interviews were verified by reviewing the middle managers' calendar entries. The observations of workspaces confirmed conclusions drawn from interviews about the potential for informal interactions among unit employees. A telling case is that of RuralULibrary-MM2, whose office was located so far away from many of the DRs; this middle manager had to seek opportunities for interactions with DRs, and through observation, it was noted that few if any informal interactions occurred near the MM-2's office. Moreover, there was no (0) expectations consensus (or overlap) among the role set members in this case, and the middle manager reported higher than average role ambiguity. Conversely, through document analysis and observation, it was relatively easy to verify the regular formal and informal interactions that support the expectations consensus of DowntownULibrary-MM4's role set members. A different method that gathered data from individual employees would not have allowed verification of interactions (or lack thereof) among the MMs, SMs and DRs. For example, in addition to having participants report how often they encountered or met with other role set members, the researcher consulted the MMs' calendars for appointments and also observed workspaces to draw conclusions about the opportunities for informal interactions. Examining this focal role through this variety of methods produced a richer, deeper understanding than any single method would have provided. A singular examination of organizational documents, for example, would have indicated an emphasis on a certain set of middle manager responsibilities codified as objectives by the organization, but would not have revealed individual employees' understanding of middle managers' contributions, nor the actual activities that middle managers perform in order to accomplish these organizational objectives. While time-intensive, this bricolage approach creates a more vivid picture of the meanings of middle management and uncovers some of the inherent incongruence among employee expectations, document-articulated responsibilities, and middle manager activities and behaviors.

Prior LIS research indicated that library managers and professional librarians have conflicting expectations (Lynch, 1976) and that professional library staff members did not know what the

duties and responsibilities of the middle managers were, which created problems when employees were asked to evaluate their supervisors (Gamaluddin, 1973). This study provides evidence that MMs are indeed subjected to conflicting expectations; there is a wide variety of middle manager responsibilities that employees may or may not acknowledge or be aware of or expect of their middle managers. This research also helps answer the question of why this happens; social interplay is a factor in understanding roles, and relationships among the organizational actors impact their understanding of their roles. This finding reinforces the importance of regular meetings and other sensegiving activities that help communicate expectations.

Employees in academic libraries learn the middle manager role primarily through experience: interactions with and observation of other organizational actors and organizational documents and processes such as organizational charts and tenure and promotion.

Most academic library middle managers experience little role conflict, role ambiguity, or turnover intentions; those susceptible to these conditions are new middle managers, those in newly created positions, or those involved in a change in organizational structure. Academic library middle managers report less role conflict than the average middle manager across all industries, even if they experience incongruent expectations sent to the middle managers from their role set members.

Middle managers who participate in strategic activities have greater role clarity (less role ambiguity). This suggests that middle managers who are involved in strategic activities have a clearer understanding of their role in the organization.

6.2 Theoretical contributions

Generalizations about stereotypical middle managers don't always apply for the middle managers in the current study. For example, the middle managers who participated do not all hold boundary-spanning positions, nor do they all experience role ambiguity and role conflict. All of the middle managers here participate in strategic activities to some extent. Thus, the findings seem to suggest that academic library middle managers are different than middle managers in other fields, and that the academic library context may influence middle managers' experiences. Influential characteristics found in the academic environment that are not found in other industries include faculty status and governance, and tenure and promotion concerns. The findings also suggest that there are critical times when academic library middle managers may experience higher role ambiguity and role conflict, and that library administrators should be aware of the conditions that influence role ambiguity

and conflict and to help their middle managers alleviate the stress of coping. These critical times include taking their first middle manager job; holding a newly-created position; and any significant organizational change that impacts the incumbent. Role conflict and role ambiguity lower job satisfaction and are associated with tension, anxiety, and job performance (Jackson & Schuler, 1985; Madden, 2013; Tubre & Collins, 2000). If left to deal with role ambiguity and conflict on their own, academic library middle managers may withdraw or sever ties with role senders (Robinson, 2012; Kahn et al., 1964), they may lie or deceive their colleagues (Grover, 1993), or they may leave the job or experience turnover intentions. Like other American workers, academic library middle managers must also deal with bullying and incivility in the workplace (Hollis, 2012; Freedman & Vreven, 2017). Library administrators should maintain an awareness of the potential stressors that may impact their middle managers' abilities to contribute to the effectiveness and success of the organization.

This research brings in to the LIS literature a testable definition of middle manager: "any individual who is regularly involved in, or interfaces with, the organization's operations and who has some access to upper management" (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1996, 111), which is applicable to a wide range of organization types and sizes. None of the library directors nor any of the participants expressed an objection or trouble with understanding this definition. Having a singular definition for middle manager should enhance scholars' ability to describe, explain and predict middle manager behaviors. There may be outliers for whom this designation could be problematic (e.g., very small academic libraries in which the librarians are frontline employees and also administrative leaders; it is inclusive of managers who have no direct reports), but this initial framework is a potent starting point for examination and discussion.

The findings of this study provide some evidence that supports Bandura's social learning theory and Biddle's assertion that the assumption of normative expectations in Organizational Role Theory is flawed; even when the organizational role has been described and codified in organizational documents, individual employees bring their own perceptions and expectations to the role, based on their experiences of the role in previous settings. Employees who participated in this study were aware of organizational documents such as organization charts, mission statements and strategic plans, but they did not use them to clarify their middle manager's role beyond a basic understanding of the organization's hierarchy (this was still important, as several direct reports reported that this is how they learned to whom their middle manager reported). Rather, employees here learned the

middle manager role through social interplay: observation of and interaction with middle managers in their organization. Therefore, each individual employee has their own set of role expectations, based on their experiences. Where an organization might have an impact on their employees' perceptions of an organizational role is in how it directs or encourages the behavior of the organizational actor: if certain middle manager behaviors are articulated and reinforced, then employees bear witness to those behaviors and they become normative expectations, at least within the confines of that particular organization. For any employee who moves beyond the organizational confines (by going to another organization or by collaborating across organizational boundaries), those normative expectations might again become a challenge and be in conflict with others' expectations.

The Taxonomy of Managerial Performance Requirements (Borman & Brush, 1993) was a useful tool as a framework for understanding managerial responsibilities and for initial coding of the observational, document, and interview data. However, for academic library middle managers, three activities were not found in the taxonomy and had to be created because they were noted frequently in the MMs' calendars and mentioned often in the interviews: "filling in", "collaborating", and "modeling behavior". If the taxonomy is to be used for future academic library middle manager research, these additions should be considered.

6.3   Practical contributions

Findings from this study, and in future related research, may influence academic library middle manager practice, preparation, and ongoing training.

Academic library middle managers are occasionally involved in strategic activities, and participants rarely reported any strategy-related expectations of their middle managers. This was a surprising finding, demonstrating that perhaps library administrators are not taking full advantage of their middle managers' unique positions within the organizational structure and their relationships with external clients and stakeholders. Academic library middle managers are uniquely positioned to participate in strategy formulation as well as implementation, and they may very well be doing so, but strategy-related behaviors and activities are not articulated in organizational documents nor were they expressed as expectations by the majority of the participants in this study. Library administrators may be missing opportunities to incorporate middle managers' perspectives in forming and adjusting strategy, and in enabling employees throughout the organization to influence and give feedback about implementation.

Although the norms for middle manager behavior vary, this study contributes to the understanding of the middle manager role in academic libraries with faculty-status librarians. Because middle management is a structured and formally defined role that includes concrete behavioral expectations (Ashforth, 2001; Biddle, 1986), this role can be learned and performed by a wide range of individuals regardless of their personal preferences (Guillen & Saris, 2013). By discovering and articulating the shared norms and expectations of the middle manager role in the academic setting, this study might assist aspiring and current middle managers as they perform the role in their own organization. The findings might also help library administrators create middle manager positions and assign appropriate responsibilities, or at least to become aware of the competencies needed for this class of employee. This study found communicating effectively, technical proficiency, maintaining relationships, coordinating subordinates, and guiding, directing and motivating to be the five role-consensus-based expectations of the middle management role in academic libraries.

Because libraries are service organizations, experiences and outcomes must be measured by the people we serve. This includes all of our stakeholders. In the higher education environment, we are asked to demonstrate how our departmental activities are supporting educational and research goals and student success outcomes. How are middle managers contributing to that end-game? Because each institution has a unique set of goals and unique circumstances, middle manager effectiveness may need to be measured locally. Library administrators must ensure that the work being done by their middle managers is relevant to organizational outcomes and this should be reflected in their evaluations and work plans.

As we continue to learn more about the middle manager role and competencies, we can add this knowledge to our practice by adding these competencies and expectations to our organizational documents, training our librarians so that they develop these competencies, and connecting these competencies to our organizational values and outcomes. Library administrators should also consider how their employees interpret the middle manager role: if employee expectations don't match the organization's values, how might administrators go about managing or influencing their employees' expectations of the middle manager role?

Library schools train students to be librarians, not managers. Robinson (2012) found that ministers' training differed from parishioners' expectations, causing conflict for the ministers. While the current study found conflicting expectations among the role set members, they don't occur

because the MMs' training differs from role set members' expectations; they differ because the MMs receive no managerial training in the first place. Library managers are not trained to be managers. Academic library employees learn what a middle manager is and does through socialization. Since the middle manager role is learned through social interplay, library administrators need to pay closer attention to who is modeling the middle manager behaviors in their organizations. How are the middle managers themselves learning the job? Rather than leave the middle managers to figure things out on their own, libraries could invest in their current and aspiring middle managers, model the behavior they would like to see, provide the additional training middle managers need to adequately perform these behaviors, and then evaluate and give constructive feedback throughout the performance cycle. Based on these findings, it would also be useful for library administrators to provide clarity about the middle manager role to all employees, as this will possibly minimize the conflicting expectations sent to the middle managers from their role senders, thereby lessening their stress and turnover intentions.The findings here suggest a multifaceted approach of formal competency training as well as social learning would be beneficial.

As employees plan their career path, they might find it useful to know that middle managers in libraries experience less role ambiguity and conflict, and that they occasionally participate in strategic activities, meaning they have some critical impact on the organization's strategic directions.

Many early- and mid-career librarians find themselves in middle management positions, sometimes soon after they have left library school. This study sheds light on the kind of training and theoretical foundations these future middle managers need to be effective, and what library and information science educators and schools might do to contribute to their success.

Understanding the roles and contributions of contemporary middle management is critical as organizations grapple with maintaining vitality into the future. A more comprehensive understanding of the role of middle managers is also beneficial to LIS programs and instructors, as it gives some guidance about relevant course content. The results of this study contribute to the literature regarding middle manager activity, role consensus among the middle managers' role set, middle manager turnover intentions, LIS curriculum, academic library management, and methods for role research.

APPENDIX A

Interview questions

<u>for MMs:</u>

1. For this research project, a middle manager is any individual who is regularly involved in the organization's operations and who has some access to upper management. In what ways are you involved in the organization's operations? What kind of access do you have to upper management?

2. A role is a socially defined pattern of behavior that is expected of an individual in a designated function in a particular position within a group, organization, or society. What behaviors are expected of you in your role as middle manager in this organization? Probes: What are your job duties? What activities do you do to accomplish those duties? [RQ1]

3. Where are those expectations coming from? Probes: What does your immediate supervisor expect? What do your peers (fellow MMs) expect? What do your direct reports expect? What do organizational documents indicate? [RQ2]

4. Do you think that the expectations of the other middle managers in your organization are similar or different to the behaviors expected of you?

5. (Show artifact: job/position description) Do you think your job description accurately expresses what is expected of you? If not, what is missing or incorrect? Is your job description consistent with the duties you perform? If not, please tell me what duties you have that are not indicated on your job description. [RQ2]

6. (Show artifact: participant's work calendar) Let's review your work calendar entries from the past three months. Were your activities during this span of time typical or were there unusual events? [RQ1]

7. What prior preparation did you have for your current middle management position? Probes: coursework, training, experiences. Have you pursued additional training since becoming a middle manager? What training, and why? [RQ2]

8. Do you work with and across other departments? Do you coordinate the work of others outside of your department? [RQ1]

for SMs:

1. What is your position title?

2. How many years have you worked in your current position? How many years have you worked in this library? In the library industry?

3. What's your educational background? Probes: level, majors

4. Describe your last formal interaction with [the middle manager]. Describe your last informal interaction with [the middle manager]. Are these typical of the kinds of interactions you have with him/her? If not, what other sort of interactions do you have? [Senior managers will be asked this question for each of their middle managers that participate in this study.][RQ1]

5. A role is a socially defined pattern of behavior that is expected of an individual in a designated function in a particular position within a group, organization, or society. What behaviors do you expect of a middle manager? Probes: as it relates to yours; mentoring, subject expertise, supervisory expertise, strategic activities, communication, etc. [RQ1]

6. What are your expectations of the MMs who report directly to you? Do the expectations vary at all? Probes: Do the expectations vary based on the areas the middle manager oversees? Do they vary based on the middle manager's personality, age, experience? [RQ1]

7. How do you communicate your expectations to your middle managers? Probes: through conversations, meetings, other interactions? Through organizational documents? [RQ2]

8. How did you gain an understanding of the MM role in this organization? Probes: Experience as an MM yourself? Organization documents? Managerial training or mentoring? [RQ2]

9. Do you think your middle managers have any influence on the strategic direction of the library? If so, describe three activities that they do that you think are strategic in nature. [RQ1, RQ4]

10. What is your age?

<u>for DRs:</u>

1. What is your position title?

2. How many years have you worked in your current position? How many years have you worked in this library? In the library industry?

3. What's your educational background? Probes: level, majors

4. Describe your last formal interaction with [the middle manager]. Describe your last informal interaction with [the middle manager]. Are these typical of the kinds of interactions you have with him/her? If not, what other sort of interactions do you have? [RQ1]

5. A role is a socially defined pattern of behavior that is expected of an individual in a designated function in a particular position within a group, organization, or society. Your immediate supervisor's role is "middle manager". What behaviors do you expect of a middle manager? Probes: as it relates to yours; mentoring, subject expertise, supervisory expertise, strategic activities, communication, etc. [RQ1]

6. How did you gain an understanding of your immediate supervisor's role in this organization? Probes: through interactions with them? Conversations with other colleagues? [RQ2]

7. (Show artifact: middle manager's job description) Have you ever read your immediate supervisor's job description? Please underline any expectations or job duties that you knew about prior to today. Please circle any expectations or job duties that you didn't know about before today. Do you think any expectations or duties are missing? [RQ2]

8. Have you ever read this organization's documents such as job descriptions, mission statement, strategic plan, and/or organization charts? If so, what, if anything, did you learn about your immediate supervisor's role in the organization? [RQ2]

9. Do you think your immediate supervisor has any influence on the strategic direction of the library? If so, describe three activities that they do that you think are strategic in nature. [RQ1, RQ4]

10. What is your age?

APPENDIX B

Questionnaire for middle managers

Strategic activity (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1996)

âIn your experience as a manager, how frequently have you performed the following activities?â

1=Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Occasionally, 4=Regularly, 5=Frequently

Upward influence

Championing alternatives (divergent):

1. Justify and define new programs

2. Evaluate the merits of new proposals

3. Search for new opportunities

4. Propose programs or projects to higher level managers

   Synthesizing information (integrative):

5. Gather information on the feasibility of new programs

6. Communicate the activities of competitors, suppliers, etc.

7. Assess changes in the external environment

   Downward influence

   Facilitating adaptability (divergent):

8. Encourage informal discussion and information sharing

9. Relax regulations to get new projects started

10. "Buy time" for experimental programs

11. Locate and provide resources for trial projects

12. Provide a safe haven for experimental programs

    Implementing deliberate strategy (integrative):

13. Monitor activities to support top management objectives

14. Translate goals into action plans

15. Translate goals into individual objectives

16. Sell top management initiatives to subordinates

Role conflict and role ambiguity

1=Completely untrue, 2=Untrue, 3=Somewhat untrue, 4=Neutral, 5=Somewhat true, 6=True, 7=Completely true

Component Item (Factor) I: Role Ambiguity CA=.81

19 I know exactly what is expected of me.

12 I know what my responsibilities are.

2 I feel certain about how much authority I have.

4 There are clear, planned goals and objectives for my job.

25 Explanation of what has to be done is clear.

10 I know that I have divided my time properly.

Component Item (Factor) II: Role Conflict (Intra-sender) CA=.76

5 I have to do things that should be done differently.

26 I work on unnecessary things.

24 I receive an assignment without adequate resources and materials to execute it.

11 I receive an assignment without the manpower to complete it.

Component Item (Factor) III: Role Conflict (Inter-sender) CA=.66 (Factors II and III combined CA=.81)

22 I do things that are apt to be accepted by one person and not accepted by others.

18 I work with two or more groups that operate quite differently.

20 I receive incompatible requests from two or more persons.

13 I have to oppose a rule or policy in order to carry out an assignment.

Turnover intentions

To what extent do you agree with the following statements: 1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neither agree nor disagree, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly agree

1. I will actively look for a new job in the next year.

2. I often think about quitting.

3. I will probably look for a new job in the next year.

Traditional managerial activities

Luthans and Lockwood's (1984) LOS Categories of Managerial Activities and Behavioral Descriptions (observed empirically and coded by multiple coders; 100s of managers).

Four categories of activities: traditional management (planning, decision making, and controlling); routine communication (exchanging routine information and handling paper work); human resource management (motivating, disciplining, handling conflict, staffing, and training); and networking (socializing or politicking, and interacting with outsiders).

- Planning

  - setting goals and objectives

  - defining tasks needed to accomplish goals

  - scheduling employees, timetables

  - assigning tasks and providing routine instructions

  - coordinating activities of different subordinates to keep work running smoothly

  - organizing the work

- Staffing

  - developing job descriptions for position openings

  - reviewing applications

  - interviewing applicants

  - hiring

  - contacting applicants to inform them of hiring decision

  - "filling in" where needed

- Training/Developing

  - orienting employees, arranging for training seminars, etc.

  - clarifying roles, duties, job descriptions

- coaching, mentoring, walking subordinates through task

- helping subordinate with personal development plans

• Decisionmaking

  - defining problems

  - choosing between two or more alternatives or strategies

  - handling day-to-day operational crises as they arise

  - weighing the tradeoffs; cost/benefit analysis

  - making the decision

  - developing new procedures to increase efficiency

• Handling Paperwork

  - processing mail

  - reading reports, in-box

  - writing reports, memos, letters, etc.

  - doing routine financial reporting and bookkeeping

  - doing general desk work

• Exchanging Information

  - answering routine procedural questions

  - receiving and disseminating requested information

  - conveying results of meetings

  - giving or receiving routine information over the phone

  - holding staff meetings of an informational nature (e.g., status updates, new company
    policies, etc.)

• Controlling

  - inspecting work

- walking around

- monitoring performance data (e.g., computer 3 printouts, production, financial reports)

- practicing preventive maintenance

- Motivating/Reinforcing

  - allocating formal organizational rewards

  - asking for input, participation

  - conveying appreciation, compliments

  - giving credit where due

  - listening to suggestions

  - giving positive performance feedback

  - increasing job challenge

  - delegating responsibility and authority

  - letting subordinates determine how to do their own work

  - supporting the group before superiors and others, backing a subordinate

- Disciplining/Punishing

  - enforcing rules and policies

  - glaring, nonverbal harassing

  - demoting, firing, laying off employee

  - issuing any formal organizational reprimand or notice

- Interacting with Others

  - public relations

  - contacts with customers

  - contacts with suppliers, vendors

  - external meetings

– community service activities

- Managing Conflict

  – managing interpersonal conflict between subordinates or others

  – appealing to higher authority to resolve a dispute

  – appealing to third-party negotiators

    ∗ seeking cooperation or consensus between conflicting parties

    ∗ attempting to resolve conflicts between subordinate and self

- Socializing/Politicking

  – engaging in nonwork-related chitchat (e.g., or personal matters)

  – "joking around"

  – discussing rumors, hearsay, grapevine

  – complaining, griping, downgrading others

  – politicking, gamesmanship

Borman & Brush, 1993, Taxonomy of Managerial Performance Requirements Mega-Dimension Names and Definitions

Table C.1: Taxonomy of Managerial Performance Requirements

Dimension Names	Definitions
1. Planning and organizing	formulating short- and long-term goals and objectives, forecasting possible problems for the unit/organization and developing strategies for addressing these problems, organizing and prioritizing work, planning and organizing own work, and time management.

2. Guiding, directing, and motivating subordinates and providing feedback	providing guidance and direction to subordinates; motivating subordinates by providing them with recognition, encouragement, constructive criticism, and other feedback as appropriate; helping to set goals and maintaining performance standards for subordinates; and monitoring subordinate performance.
3. Training, coaching, and developing subordinates	identifying staff training needs and developing responsive training programs and materials or ensuring that such programs/materials get developed; training, teaching, and coaching subordinates; and assisting subordinates in improving their job skills.
4. Communicating effectively and keeping others informed	communicating orally and in written form; keeping subordinates, superiors, and others informed; and obtaining and then passing on information to those who should know.
5. Representing the Organization to customers and the public	representing the organization to those not in the organization; maintaining good organizational image to customers, the public, stockholders, the government, and so on (as appropriate); and dealing with customer/client problems.

6. Technical Proficiency	keeping up-to-date technically, solving technical problems, possessing sufficient technical job knowledge to perform effectively in own specialty, and providing technical advice to others in the organization.
7. Administration and paperwork	handling paperwork requirements; performing day-to-day administrative tasks such as reviewing reports, going through mail, approving routine requests, and so on; keeping accurate records; and administering policies, as appropriate.
8. Maintaining good working relationships	developing and maintaining smooth and effective working relationships with superiors, peers, and subordinates; displaying personal concern for subordinates; backing up and supporting subordinates as appropriate; and encouraging and fostering cooperation between subordinates.
9. Coordinating subordinates and others resources to get the job done	properly utilizing personnel and other resources to increase unit and organizational effectiveness; coordinating the work in own unit; and balancing interests of own unit and those of the whole organization, if necessary.

10. Decision making/problem solving	making sound and timely decisions, paying attention to and taking into account all relevant information in making decisions, and developing effective solutions to organizational problems.
11. Staffing	maintaining staff and workforce; recruiting, interviewing, selecting, hiring, transferring, and promoting persons in the organization; and maintaining an effective career development system.
12. Persisting to reach goals	persisting with extra effort to attain objectives and overcoming obstacles to get the job done.
13. Handling crises and stress	recognizing and responding effectively to unexpected situations, handling crises and stress calmly and effectively, responding well to tight time deadlines, and addressing conflict appropriately.
14. Organizational Commitment	working effectively within the framework of organizational policies, procedures, rules, and so on; carrying out orders and directives; and supporting reasonable policies of higher authorities in organizations.

15. Monitoring and controlling resources	controlling costs and personnel resources and monitoring and overseeing utilization of funds.
16. Delegating	assigning subordinates duties and responsibilities in line with their interests and abilities as well as the needs of the organization, and delegating authority and responsibility to aid in subordinate growth.
17. Selling/influencing	persuading others in the organization to accept own good ideas, presenting own positions clearly and decisively, and arguing effectively for position when appropriate.
18. Collecting and interpreting data	knowing what data are relevant to address a problem or issue; properly interpreting numerical data and other information, thus facilitating correct inferences; and effectively organizing data to help solve problems and make decisions.

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