Reconceptualising Organisational Role Theory for Contemporary Organisational Contexts.

By

Mark Wickham

and

Melissa Parker

Mark.Wickham@utas.edu.au
University of Tasmania
School of Management
Locked Bag 16
Hobart Campus
Sandy Bay, Hobart
Tasmania
Australia, 7001
+61 3 6226 2159 (PH)
+61 3 6226 2808 (FAX)

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Abstract: Research Paper

Purpose of this paper
This research reviews extant Organisational Role Theory (ORT) literature, and identifies issues that limit its usefulness to contemporary academics and practitioners alike. It was found that three assumptions underpinning classical ORT are inadequate to account for the array of roles enacted by employees and the manner in which they impact upon working-life.

Design/methodology/approach
A review of ORT literature was conducted in light of the issues surrounding the effective implementation of HR policies in the workplace. The paper was based upon a review of the intersection between ORT and contemporary HR management, and explored using primary survey and semi-structured interview data.

Findings
This research suggests that ORT needs to incorporate the key themes of 'multi-faceted employee', 'employer recognition/facilitation' and 'compartmentalisation' into its assumptions in order to account for contemporary HRM issues.

Research limitations/implications (if applicable)
This research is only exploratory in nature, and thus requires its findings to be verified in larger sample sizes, and amongst respondents from different cultures and industry categories.

Practical implications (if applicable)
This research has practical implications for HR managers wishing to employ effective role-taking/WLB policies in their workplace. Current WLB issues are well established in the literature, and the reconceptualisation of ORT provides some insight into what might constitute the tenets of an effective WLB policy regime.

What is original/value of paper
This paper provides an exploration of the contemporary HRM issues that need to be included in a reconceptualisation of ORT. This research would be of value to both academics (reconceptualising classical ORT) as well as practitioners (who would observe specific implications for the formulation of effective HR policies in the workplace).

Key Words: Human Resource Management, Organisational Role Theory.

INTRODUCTION.

Since its inception some 30 years ago, Organisational Role Theory (ORT) has served as an important theory underpinning human resource (HR) management and has provided a framework for the allocation of work roles within the firm (Broderick, 1998; Cardina & Wicks, 2004; Clifford, 1996; Lopopolo, 2002; Madsen, 2002). The origins and development of ORT can be traced back to the work of Katz and Kahn (1966) and their follow-up 1978 text *The Social Psychology of Organisations.* The authors argued that the division of labour principle necessarily requires employees to enact specific work roles in order to perform their required tasks effectively and efficiently (Katz & Kahn, 1978). They further stated that organisations are essentially a network of employees enacting specific roles that are 'expected' and 'required' by others in the institution. Where employees enact their roles in a manner that is 'unexpected' by their colleagues, Katz and Kahn (1966; 1978) state that repercussions are likely to occur. Where the repercussions are punitive for the employee, their continued ability and/or commitment to their assigned roles can be compromised. Katz and Kahn (1966; 1978) refer to such repercussions as an 'impact on the employee's working-life', and state that if employee roles are not managed effectively, they are likely to manifest *inter alia* in job dissatisfaction, lower levels of commitment and productivity, increased intention to resign, and higher rates of absenteeism.

In recent times, and despite the plethora of research in HR management, the effective management of employee work roles has become an increasingly controversial topic both for academics and practitioners alike (Boles, Wood & Johnson, 2003; de Luis Carnicer, Sanchez, Perez, & Jimenez, 2004; Smithson & Stokoe, 2005). The source of the

controversy stems from the observed difficulty firms have with integrating the work-role demands they place on their employees with the increasingly complex array of non-work roles employees enact for their overall well-being (Boles, Wood & Johnson, 2003; Mellor, Mathieu, Barnes-Farrell, & Rogelberg, 2001). The controversy has generally played out in the 'work-life balance' literature, with recognition that contemporary HR management has failed to effectively reconcile with the increasingly complex array of roles enacted by their employees (Burke, 2004; Thompson & Prottas, 2005). This increase in the complex array of roles has emanated from three societal and workplace trends since the 1980s: the shift away from the 'nuclear family' structure to more complex family forms, the increased levels of diversity in the workplace, and the increased use of technologies that blur the work/non-work divide (de Luis Carnicer, Sanchez, Perez, & Jimenez, 2004; Nordenmark, 2002, 2004).

The shift away from the 'nuclear' family structure with its single breadwinner has arguably been one of the most marked societal changes in the past thirty years (Marks, 2000). Today, the array of family structures (i.e. dual income families, single or shared parent families, blended or step-families, childless and/or same-sex couples etc.) requires its members to fulfil a number of varied roles beyond that of the traditional 'husband and father' and 'wife and mother' of the 1960s and 70s (see Davis & Kalleberg, 2006; Jacobs & Gerson, 2001). Whilst such additional roles have always existed for 'husband and father' and 'wife and mother' in the past, the prevalence and importance of activities such as community work, charity and/or cause-related work, mentoring and even recreation have become recognised as important traits in a functional society worthy of organisational support (Kirchmeyer, 2004).

In terms of diversity, two major trends are apparent in the modern workplace: the increased participation of women and the increased levels of cultural and age diversity in the labour market (Aryee, Fields & Luk, 1999; Davis & Kalleberg, 2006). Both of these trends have impacted the management of HR, with the need for employers to adapt their policies to suit gender differences (e.g. the need for maternity and other forms of parental leave), age differences (e.g. training programs, part-time and/or job sharing arrangements, the need to care for children/aged parents etc.) and cultural differences (e.g. the accommodation of religious faith in the design and implementation of work processes) (Crooker, Smith & Tabak, 2002). Up until now, firms have dealt with these issues discretely and on a piece-meal basis, and then only as the "problem" became apparent. Research by Hedge, Borman and Lammlein (2006) indicates that a majority firms are manifestly ill-equipped to deal with the three levels of diversity, and so long as firms want to effectively manage their HR into the foreseeable future, measures must be taken so that they can be managed in a systematic and proactive manner.

The increased use of computer technologies in the contemporary workplace has also served to blur the boundary between work-time and non-work-time for employees (Hyman, Scholarios & Baldry, 2005; Shaffer, Harison, Gilley & Luk, 2001). The use of laptop computers, wireless e-commerce and mobile phone technology now enables work to be completed outside traditional working hours, and this has been especially prevalent for high skilled professions and/or those working for global companies (Davis & Kalleberg, 2006; Shaffer, Harison, Gilley & Luk, 2001). Whilst employers have often cited the increased use of technology as a family-friendly policy that enables their employees to enact their work-roles more flexibly, its use has also proven detrimental when employees report they

are unable to demarcate their working-roles from their non-work-roles in any meaningful way (Bailyn, Drago & Kochan, 2002). The importance of understanding how the societal and workplace changes have impacted the enactment of multiple (and often competing) employee roles is considered paramount in achieving an effective and sustainable 'role balance' in the modern workplace (Kasper, Meyer & Schmidt, 2006; Lewis, Rapoport, & Gambles, 2003).

Despite the gravity of the societal and workplace changes noted above, however, ORT has enjoyed only modest reconceptualisation since 1978. As noted by George (1993), ORT emanated from research conducted in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and its tenets and assumptions remain reflective of the male-dominated workforce and 'nuclear' family social structure prevalent at the time. She goes on to state that ORT:

> … has been relatively dormant during the past three decades…The breadth and generality of [organisational] role theory may be both its major attraction and its greatest flaw (1993: 355).

Despite George's (1993) observation, ORT has still not attracted any significant level of reconceptualisation, regardless of the fact that it remains extensively used as a theory of employee behaviour and a basis for HR policy development (Broderick, 1998; Cardina & Wicks, 2004; Clifford, 1996; Lopopolo, 2002; Madsen, 2002). The one major advancement in ORT has come from the emergence of the 'work-life balance' issue, and the impact that non-work roles have on employees' working-life. However, despite the name given to the work-life balance literature, its focus has been on the work-family interface, and has largely ignored the array of non-family roles that similarly impact on employees' working-lives (Boles, Wood & Johnson, 2003; Mellor, Mathieu, Barnes-Farrell, & Rogelberg, 2001; Regina, 1994). Notwithstanding the wealth of literature on the importance of multiple roles

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for individuals' well being (de Luis Carnicer, Sanchez, Perez, & Jimenez, 2004; Marks & MacDermid, 1996; Nordenmark, 2004; Reitzes & Mutran, 1994) the extent and impact of these external roles has been virtually overlooked by ORT research. As Smithson and Stokoe (2005: 165) argue it is important for organisations to acknowledge the importance of multiple employee roles as:

> …a mother is not 'just' a mother: she will have other roles not shared with all other mothers in the workplace.

Given these issues, there is an imperative to investigate the array of roles that employees enact, and the manner in which the array of non-work roles impact their organisational roles (i.e. their working-life). There is also an imperative to reconceptualise the tenets of ORT so that it better reflects the realities of effectively managing human resources in the modern organisational context.

ORGANISATIONAL ROLE THEORY: A BRIEF REVIEW.

Classical ORT focuses on the roles that individuals enact in social systems that are pre-planned, task-oriented, and hierarchical, and therefore form a vital function in the achievement of organisational goals (Biddle, 1986). Katz and Kahn (1966) state that the assignment of work-roles prescribes the behaviour that employees are expected to comply with so that they are able to perform their specified tasks and duties effectively. According to ORT, the assigned work-roles must be conferred by the firm and adopted by each individual employee in order for an organisation to function effectively as a goal-oriented social entity. As a social entity, an organisation comprises a nexus of distinct functional groups of employees that have specific work-roles to enact. Under ORT, these functional groups help to define a 'role-set' for the individual employee and determine the specific

role-behaviours the employee is expected to enact (Katz & Kahn, 1966). As such, the enacted set of role-behaviours essentially mirrors the expectation of other employees, and implies two important points.

The first is that each individual employee both confers and accepts a 'role' that is reflective of the organisation's culture and norms of behaviour. The second is that for an organisation to function effectively and efficiently, the array of roles must be effectively communicated, fully understood, and accepted by its employees (Katz & Kahn, 1966). In order to control for deviance (i.e. any variation between role-expectation and actual role-enactment) ORT provides a review framework known as 'role-episodes'. A role-episode refers to any interaction between employees whereby role-expectations and role-behaviours are manifest in measurable consequences. Where deviance from expected role-enactment is detected (e.g. excessive absenteeism, failure to perform, etc.) management functions such as 'performance reviews' or 'retraining' allow the organisation to re-confer or clarify role-expectations upon the deviant employee (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 organisation (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 behaviour 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).

Therefore, the role-sending and role-receiving functions continue until the employees' role-enactment conforms to the role-expectations of their relevant colleagues/superiors. Figure 1 below represents a model of classical ORT as it relates to the employment relationship.

INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE

ORGANISATIONAL ROLE THEORY: THE THEORETICAL ISSUES

According to Biddle (1986), George (1993), and Smithson and Stokoe (2005), the diminishing usefulness of classical ORT can be traced to limitations in its role-taking, role-consensus and role-conflict assumptions.

The role-taking assumption

The role-taking assumption states that employees will accept a role that is conferred upon them as a result of the socialisation and role-episode processes (Biddle, 1986). In the organisational context, employees will accept the role required by their employer when they accept a position with that organisation (Jackson & Schuler, 1992), or subsequent position advancements. However, Katz and Kahn (1978) identified three factors outside the role-episode framework that may influence an employee's decision to accept and/or enact the required work-roles: organisational, personal and interpersonal (Katz & Kahn, 1978). Organisational factors refer to the structure of the organisation, its formal policies and its rewards and penalties (Katz & Kahn, 1978). Personal attributes refer to the employee's characteristics that influence their propensity to behave in certain ways, such as their motives and values (Katz & Kahn, 1978). Interpersonal factors refer to the quality of

the relationships existing between the individual and those fellow colleagues that help construct their expected role-sets (Katz & Kahn, 1978). Subsequent research (Heimer & Matsueda, 1994; Thornwaite, 2004) indicates that of the three, organisational factors appear inadequate for the modern organisational context.

In terms of the organisational factors, Thornwaite (2004) and Heimer and Matsueda (1994) indicate that there is a strong relationship between the ability of an employee to enact the required role-behaviour and their level of job effectiveness and satisfaction. The authors suggest that where employees have a consistent interaction with similarly skilled and experienced colleagues, the issues surrounding role-enactment are minimised, as they are likely to share common perspectives and display similarities in their role-taking behaviour. However, as Lindbeck and Snower (2001) note, changes in HRM have resulted in many employers now requiring employees to multi-task, which involves employees accepting multiple roles within the workplace. Classical ORT, however, indicates that this will be problematic to employees as the communication and enactment of multiple-roles becomes far more complex (Smithson & Stokoe, 2005). The complexity issue arises from two main sources: the first being the increase in required role-behaviours, and the potentially variable role-expectations and expectations of colleagues and superiors (Coverman, 1989; Katz & Kahn, 1978; Jackson & Sullivan, 1990). As a consequence, employees may feel forced to enact three remedial courses of action: choosing between the roles, compromising the behaviour expected in the role, or withdrawing from the situation entirely (van de Vliert, 1981). The role-taking assumption has been criticised in contemporary literature for being far too simplistic for the modern era, and therefore fails to account for the array of factors that influence the role-taking component (Biddle, 1986; George, 1993).

The role-consensus assumption

The role-consensus assumption states that both employees and employers hold common norms and values that give rise to consistency in expectation and behaviour (Biddle, 1986; Smithson & Stokoe, 2005). In the operationalisation of ORT, consensus is an important component between the role-conferrers and the employee in order for role-enactment to occur (Katz & Kahn, 1966). The literature identifies two contrasting perspectives proposing how consensus occurs. The sociological perspective holds that role-behaviour occurs as a result of shared norms for the work-role, whereas the psychological perspective holds that role-behaviour occurs as a result of attitude similarity between the role-sender and the individual employee (Biddle, 1986). In the organisational context, role-consensus is assumed as part of the employment contract, whereby employees are made aware of what behaviour is expected of them to complete their task, and managers serve to reinforce or extinguish behaviour using rewards and sanctions (Biddle, 1986). Kerr (1978) notes that the role-consensus assumption requires that work-roles are pre-defined, agreed upon and static before consensus can be achieved. However, this fails to account for the complexity of the array of non-work roles enacted by employees that impact at the workplace, and the fact that these roles necessarily change over time (George, 1993; Kerr, 1978; Rotolo, 2000; Turner, 1990).

Advancement in the conceptualisation of 'role-consensus' can be found in the emergent work-family/work-life balance literature. This body of literature is based on the premise that role-consensus is limited due to the organisation's inability to recognise the roles that employees enact outside the workplace, and the nature of their interaction with work-roles

(Spinks, 2004). As Tompson and Werner (1997: 583) state:

> Recent calls for greater balance between work and family life arise out of a perception that managers and organisations frequently put pressure on individuals to achieve success at work at the expense of success in other roles.

The contribution of the work-family/work-life literature, therefore, remains limited. Despite the name given the literature, it remains largely focused on the work-family interface and provides only a limited account of the non-family roles that impact on an individual's working-life (Hacker & Doolen, 2003; Mellor, Mathieu, Barnes-Farrell & Rogelberg, 2001; Noor, 2004; Pocock, 2005). The subsequent failure of managers to recognise the inter-relationship between an employee's work and non-work roles can also be costly to the organisation. As Elloy and Smith (2003: 63) argue, the effective management of the array of work and non-work roles requires:

> …an holistic approach to human resource management implies a greater awareness of the total context of worker's daily lives, not just those hours they spend at work.

Therefore, the issue centres on the inadequacy of classical ORT (despite the contributions of work-family/work-life balance literature) to provide a framework for academics and practitioners to construct realistic role-sets as a basis for role-consensus.

The role-conflict assumption

The role-conflict assumption suggests that an employee will experience stress and dissatisfaction when the role expectations embedded in one of their work roles differ, or even contradict those associated with another of their work roles (Bedian & Armenakis, 1981; Miles & Perreault, 1976). An increasing body of research emanating from the work-family/work-life balance literature, however, indicates that role-conflict in the workplace

can actually result from conflict between work-roles and non-work roles (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Smith, 1992). Noor (2004) in particular indicates that role-conflict in the workplace can occur under three conditions. The first is where the time needed to fulfil one role leaves insufficient time to devote to other roles; the second is where stress from fulfilling one role makes it difficult to meet the requirements of fulfilling another; the third is where specific behaviours associated with one role make it difficult to meet the requirements of another. The focus on role-conflict antecedents and prevention inherent to classical ORT are therefore problematic, as it does not provide a definitive understanding of the array of non-work roles that can cause stress and dissatisfaction in the workplace. This 'gap' constrains our understanding about the manner in which non-work roles may give rise to role-conflict in the workplace, and limits the capacity of ORT to provide guidance to those wishing to minimise its impact or occurrence (Biddle, 1986).

ORT: The research opportunity

The theoretical issues discussed above indicate that the development of ORT has failed to keep pace with the past three decades of change in the organisational context. The issues identified in this paper fall broadly into two categories, each of which underpins an important research question. The first category includes the failure of ORT to recognise the array of non-work roles enacted by employees, and the manner in which these impact on an employee's working-life. As such, and to redress this theoretical concern, the first research question is:

What are the non-work roles that impact employee's working- life?

The second category includes the failure of ORT's assumptions to develop in accordance

with the contemporary organisational context. As such, the second research question is:

> *In what ways must the theoretical assumptions of ORT be reconceptualised to account for the contemporary organisational context?*

METHOD.

In order to answer the two research questions above, this research comprised a two-stage qualitative data gathering process. The first stage included the implementation of a questionnaire-survey to a sample of 400 full-time employees in the central business district of Hobart, Tasmania. The questionnaire-survey design included open-ended questions that allowed respondents to provide detailed qualitative feedback regarding the array of non-work roles that they felt impacted on their working-life. The questionnaires were completed by n=102 full-time employees (i.e. a 26 per cent response rate) of which 55 were women and 47 were men. The age range represented by the sample was 23 to 55 years, with a mean of 34 years. In range of working experience of the sample was 3 to 31 years, with an average 12 years. The occupations broadly represented by the sample included: accountants/financiers (n=26), sales representatives (n=22), office administrators (n=18), manufacturers (n=15), hospitality workers (n=12) and tourism workers (n=9).

The questionnaire-survey was designed to cover four areas of interest in this research project (see Appendix D). The first three questions sought to identify the non-work roles that employees enact and why these roles were considered important. The second set of questions sought to understand how these roles identified impacted on their working-life. The third set of questions focussed on identifying how the sample managed the impacts

within their employment relationship. The final set of questions sought to gain insight into the employers' awareness of these impacts, and the manner in which the sample population perceived their employer's efforts to accommodate them. The questionnaire-survey concluded by asking questions about demographic characteristics. The final page of the questionnaire-survey included a detachable sheet for the respondents to complete their contact details should they wish to participate in Stage Two of the research project.

The second stage of the data collection process sought to collect the data required to answer the second research question, and in particular gain rich and thick descriptions about how the perceived impacts were managed within the employment relationship. In order to gather this data, the research employed semi-structured interview methodology. The use of semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to strengthen investigations by allowing direct access to individual experiences of their non-work roles and impacts between these roles and their working-life (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994). The semi-structured interviews comprised standardised questions (i.e. common to all participants) whilst allowing latitude for the introduction of new questions in response to participants' comments. The use of standardised questions allowed for comparison between respondents and was developed in response to issues that were identified from the previous research stage.

Of the 102 usable survey respondents, a sample of twenty respondents was selected for the semi-structured interviews. The occupations broadly represented by the sample included: accountants/financiers (n=4), sales representatives (n=4), office administrators (n=3), manufacturers (n=3), hospitality workers (n=3) and tourism workers (n=3). These respondents were selected as they reported experiencing difficulties in minimising the

negative impacts of non-work roles, and that the strategies employed (both individually and by their employer) were not perceived to be adequate. The interviews conducted in person were done at a location and time convenient with the respondent and were audio recorded onto audiotape for transcription purposes.   There were fifteen standardised interview questions asked of the respondent group (refer to Appendix E). The first question was introductory, and re-acquainted the respondent to the research topic and to the survey they had already completed. The semi-structured interview then asked respondents whether they perceived their employer recognised their non-work roles and their impact on their working-life. The questions also sought to determine whether the employer offered any assistance in managing these impacts, and the manner in which the employee perceived this assistance. Next, the semi-structured interviews sought to explore the manner in which employees attempted to manage the impact of their non-work roles on their working-life. For example, the questionnaire-survey responses, a recurring theme of 'separation' between working-life and non working-life was identified. The researcher then sought to investigate whether respondents attempted to consciously separate and whether they felt they were successful in their attempt. The final question sought any additional comments or thoughts from the respondents that they would like to share that had not been covered in the interview.

The data collected was subjected to a three-stage analysis process. The first stage included the transcription and importation into the NUD*IST software analysis program. The second stage involved the first-round coding of data into categories required to answer the first research question. The third stage involved the second-round coding of data in order to explore the emergent themes required to answer the second research question. Coding

refers to the process of converting information into contextual values for the purposes of data storage, management and analysis allowing theme identification (Ticehurst & Veal, 2000). The coding and re-coding process overcomes the difficulties inherent to the use of open-ended questions, given that much of the data gathered in this manner may be voluminous, varied, and difficult to manage (Gray, 2004). The data gathered in this research project was subjected to coding in terms of the thematic areas (known as 'nodes') identified in the literature review process.

The nodes initially generated from the literature review formed an index system that appears in Appendix A. The transcripts were then scrutinised for significant terms, concepts, and issues located therein according to units of observation, and coded according to the nodes in the index system. Where it was appropriate, data was allocated to more than one node for analysis. In order to maximise reliability of this process, double-coding was implemented, which involved a third party replicating the coding process. After the initial nodes were populated with the relevant data, each individual node was then explored for their own set of emergent themes. These themes were then coded into additional nodes, and again populated accordingly. Initially, the data gathered indicated that 35 non-work roles were perceived to impact on the working-life of the sample population. The researcher was then able to categorise this array of roles into five categories that represented the context within which they were enacted (i.e. Family-based roles, Sporting-based roles etc.). After once again populating and interrogating these emergent nodes, additional and discrete sets of themes emerged concerning their impact on the respondents' working-life. Appendix B represents the additional themes and nodes constructed from the data analysis. Again, double-coding was implemented to maximise reliability of the re-coding process. The

comparative data coding was found to be comparable which indicates the data is usable and reliable for deriving inferences. The themes emanating from the primary data analysis form the basis of the discussion section that follows.

RESULTS

What are the non-work roles that impact employees' working-life?

This question was developed to identify the array of non-work roles that impacted on employees' working-life. In total, the sample returned 35 non-work roles that respondents reported impacted on their working-life. Consistent with the work-family/work-life literature the most commonly reported non-work roles to impact on the working-life was that of being a spouse. Other Family-based non-work roles that were reported included 'parent', 'being a child', 'sibling', and being 'extended family'. Respondents also reported an array of twenty-two non-family roles not represented in the work-family/work-life literature. Table 1 presents the complete list of non-work roles reported by respondents.

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

The first-round coding of the data identified five categories of non-work roles that respondents reported impacted on their working-life: Family-based, Sporting-based, Charity-based, Education-based, and Socially-based roles (see Appendix C for the detailed list). It was also found that these non-work roles impacted on working-life in three common ways: 'time', 'skill' and 'stress', but with differing effect. In terms of their impact on working-life, Family-based roles required greater flexibility in terms of the organisation's workplace practices. This finding was consistent with the 'work-family/work-life' literature in that organisations were aware of their employees' Family-

based roles and accommodated them through workplace policies. However, this research indicates that respondents felt that this awareness and the subsequent policies served largely to increase their time at work rather than enabling them to enact the Family-based roles as they would wish. In addition, respondents noted that the skills that develop in their Family-based roles such as time management, conflict resolution, and negotiation could also be better recognised by their organisations. Where respondents reported that organisational policies impacted on their ability to enact Family-based roles or that their Family-based skills were not recognised in the workplace increased levels of stress and dissatisfaction was reported.

In terms of their Sporting-based roles, respondents reported three impacts on their working-life. The first impact was that greater flexibility was required in terms of workplace policies to allow employees to regularly participate in their sporting activities. The second related to the skills developed by respondents their sporting-based roles (such as leadership and communication) and their perception that they were not necessarily recognised by their organisations. The third impact related to the working-life time lost due to injury and travel requirements. Where respondents indicated that their organisation recognised these three impacts and facilitated the enactment of Sporting-based roles and the integration of the associated skills into their working-life, greater satisfaction and lower levels of stress were reported. Conversely, where respondents indicated that their organisation restricted their ability to enact their Sporting-based roles and ignored the skills developed in these roles, higher levels of stress and dissatisfaction were reported.

In terms of their Charity-based roles, respondents reported two impacts on their working-life. The first impact was that greater flexibility was required in terms of organisational workplace policies to allow employees to participate in Charity-based roles. The second impact related to the use of specialist skills (such as first aid) that respondents developed in their Charity-based roles and the fact that these would be of great value in their workplace. Where respondents indicated that their organisation restricted their ability to enact their Charity-based roles in favour of enacting their workplace roles, higher levels of dissatisfaction were reported. Conversely, respondents also indicated that where their organisation failed to recognise the specialist skills developed in their Charity-based roles, increased levels of dissatisfaction were reported.

In terms of their Education-based roles, respondents reported three impacts on their working-life. The first impact was that greater flexibility was required in terms of organisational workplace policies that facilitated employee's studies, for example, study leave, clear career progression opportunities, etc. The second impact related to the increased level of work to complete as a result of the additional demands of their education program. The third impact related to the use of the technical skills (such as accounting, finance, law, etc.) developed in their Education-based roles. Where respondents indicated that their organisation recognised their Education-based roles and facilitated these roles higher levels of satisfaction and career advancement opportunities were reported. Conversely, where respondents indicated that their Education-based roles were not recognised, and in fact had to work unpaid overtime to perform their required work-roles, greater levels of dissatisfaction were reported.

In terms of their Socially-based roles, respondents reported one important impact on their working-life. Respondents indicated increased levels of stress and dissatisfaction when their work-roles prohibited them from accessing their social networks. This was most markedly the case in instances where respondents were expected to work unpaid overtime in order to fulfil their required work-roles. As per Appendix C, accessing their social networks included enacting roles such as 'friend', 'church member', and 'traveller' etc, roles that most respondents reported as being very important to their overall well-being, but which carried little weight with their employer in their workplace negotiations.

Research Question One: Summary.

The non-work roles found to impact on the working-life of respondents in this research were categorised into five distinct groups, each of which had varying impacts on their working-life. Although the research findings supported the relevance of the 'work-family/work-life balance' literature to ORT, there was evidence that at least four other categories of non-work roles needed to be considered for the effective management of human resources. This research recommends that a distinction be made between three groups of roles that directly impact on the working-life of full-time employees, and that managers be aware of their need to manage the needs of each effectively. The three groups refer to an employee's Work-roles, Work-family roles (i.e. the intersection of work and family roles specifically), and Work-life roles (i.e. the intersection of work roles and non-family roles). In terms of Work-roles, academics and practitioners must remain aware of the work-roles currently recognised by classical ORT. In terms of Work-family roles, they need to recognise the specific impacts of the work-family interface, and become aware of the limitations of 'family-friendly' practices that serve only to enable workers to spend

more time at work. In terms of Work-life roles, they need to recognise the array of non-work and non-family roles that are non-the-less important to employees in terms of stress relief, skill development, and the development of social support networks.

In what ways must the theoretical assumptions of ORT be reconceptualised to account for the contemporary organisational context?

This research question was developed to explore the manner in which the assumptions underpinning ORT need to be reconceptualised to account for the contemporary organisational context. As noted, the need stemmed from the three issues identified in the literature review: That 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 organisational context.

In order to address these issues, three key themes were identified from the second-round coding process. These themes included the 'multi-faceted employee', 'employer recognition/facilitation', and 'compartmentalisation'. The first key theme related to the 'multi-faceted employee', which in this study reflected respondents' apparent want not be considered as one-dimensional, or that they enacted 'only work and Family-based roles'. The research findings indicated that the respondent group enacted an array of non-work roles that included both Family-based and non-Family-based roles. Both male and female respondents indicated they engaged in Family and non-Family-based roles because they fulfilled needs not served by their work-roles. This fulfilment was identified to have three components: self-validation, self-definition, and relationship management. Self-validation refers to the extent to which the respondents felt that the enacted roles reinforced their

sense of self-worth. Self-definition refers to how the respondents felt the enacted roles reflected them as an individual. Relationship management refers to the extent that respondents felt that they were able to interact with their self-defined support networks. The following respondents exemplified these components:

> They are an integral part of me. I get self-validation from fulfilling these roles for others, in particular the volunteer role (Female, office administrator).

> They define my society and the social networks that I interact in (Female, manufacturing worker).

> I feel that my activities and achievements help define who I am. I do not wish to be defined purely by my paid work (Male, accountant/financier).

> 'Spouse' and 'parent' are the roles that I have taken which involve commitment, trust and ongoing effort and involvement. They are also the two main sources of satisfaction, enjoyment, and sense of worth that I have (Female, tourism worker).

Respondents reported that when the enactment of work-roles came at the expense of the fulfilment experienced in their non-work roles, the likelihood of dissatisfaction and turnover in the workplace increased:

> When I was working at a much higher senior management level in a previous position for 14 years it was very difficult. I would need to take work home constantly and this impacted on my parenting role significantly. I changed positions for this reason (Male office administrator).

> Ideally I would like to work part-time to be able to do all the things I want to do, such as spend time with my family and do volunteer work, but unfortunately I have to work to live (Female, hospitality).

The second key theme related to the employer recognition and facilitation. Employer recognition/facilitation refers to the extent that employers were aware of the existence and importance of the non-work roles that employees' enact. This theme had three components: 'recognition of employee's non-work roles', 'open communication', and 'employer assistance'. The recognition of employee's non-work roles referred to the extent that employers recognised the array of non-work roles that employees enacted. Open

communication referred to the extent that employees and employers communicated in terms of these roles and how it may potentially impact on the employee's working-life. Employer assistance referred to the extent that employers assisted employees in facilitating the enactment of non-work roles. The following respondents exemplified these components:

> They are aware of some impacts, but not all (Male, sales representative).

> It doesn't occur to people that when you have a young family you have other roles as well (Male, sales representative).

> I mainly discussed a non-work role that eventuated through work that boosted my role in the interview. I am a mentor to a student … They were very supportive and impressed that I had taken this on, as well as try and study. They have even offered me a vehicle on occasions for getting to the college during the day for workshops (Female, tourism worker).

> Moving into that new role, I felt I needed to be honest about my priorities and they respected that and said they would work with me to balance it. They said they wanted to retain me in that workplace and were prepared to introduce flexible working arrangements to do that (Male, office administrator).

> I was pretty annoyed with them. I mentioned that my long work hours were interfering with my home life and so they bought me a laptop to work at home instead of in the office (Female, accountant/financier).

Respondents reported that where the organisation failed to recognise and/or engage in communication regarding non-work roles, and/or did not facilitate their enactment, respondents indicated increased dissatisfaction and intention to leave. The dissatisfaction and intention to leave was exemplified by the following:

> They weren't [flexible] up until 12 months ago, but we got a new general manager who is much more 'family' and 'flexible' friendly, which has had a huge impact on me. I was previously looking to change to a company with more flexibility, but now I am happy to remain where I am (Male, office administrator).

> I have thought about leaving, but they are paying for my university fees which is an incentive to stay (Female, hospitality).

The third key theme related to compartmentalisation. Compartmentalisation refers to the attempts by employees to minimise the impact between their working-life and the enactment of their non-work roles. Specifically, respondents reporting compartmentalisation efforts indicated that they were doing so in order to reduce role-conflict in their working-life, and not to hide the fact they enacted multiple-roles. This theme was exemplified by the following comments:

> I try to have a clear separation between work and home life (Male, sales representative).

> Cram in as much activity before and after work. I make a mental choice to do all this activity and I also make a mental choice to try not to make it have an impact (Male, manufacturing worker).

> I have to actively resist the temptation (internal) and pressure to work more or do further study in order to manage my work-life balance (Female, office administrator).

> I 'attempt' to finish work, go home and leave work at work. I keep the two separate as much as I can (Female, tourism worker).

Compartmentalisation tactics included both cognitive and behavioural components. Cognitively, respondents reported their compartmentalisation efforts as the selective non-disclosure of non-work roles to their colleagues. Behaviourally, respondents reported their compartmentalisation efforts as including refusal to work overtime, refusal to 'take work home', refusal to allow family members to visit them at work, and refusal to socialise with their work colleagues. Respondents reported that where their attempts to compartmentalise were unsuccessful, and where this led to role-conflict, they reported experiencing a greater level of stress and dissatisfaction. The following respondent exemplified this perception:

> In my private life I'm always going through what I'm trying to do at work and when I'm at work I'm wondering about other things such as is my son okay at school today, he had the sniffles this morning, he's not getting sick is he; and I can't concentrate totally on work. I sometimes lose my train of thought during work processes (Female, office administrator).

The following section will use the three themes identified to address the two theoretical issues seen to limit the usefulness of ORT to contemporary academics and practitioners.

<u>The simplicity of the role-taking and role-consensus assumptions.</u>

The issue surrounding the simplicity of the role-taking and role-consensus assumptions were based on ORT's failure to account for the array of factors that influence the role-taking component. Given these interrelated issues, the key themes of the 'multi-faceted employee' and 'employer recognition/facilitation' inform a reconceptualisation of the assumptions. Firstly, the 'multi-faceted employee' theme necessitates that ORT incorporate the full array of non-work roles that impact on employees' working-life. These research findings indicated the three identified components of the 'multi-faceted employee' (i.e. self-validation, self-definition, and relationship management considerations) influence employee decisions and ability to enact work-roles, and therefore must be considered within a framework of effective human resource management. The recognition that organisations employ 'multi-faceted employees' requires managers to expand their understanding of the manner in which employees' construct their role-sets. It also requires managers to recognise the manner in which family and non-family-based roles influence employees' ability and motivation to enact their work-roles to the standard required. Where managers were unable to do this, respondents in this study indicated higher levels of stress, dissatisfaction, and intent to leave the workplace.

Secondly, the 'employer recognition/facilitation' theme necessitates that ORT incorporate the three distinct role-groups (i.e. Work-role, Work-family, and Work-life) along with 'open communication' into its assumptions. It is important to note that both the Work-

family and Work-life role-groups had varying influences on respondents ability and motivation to enact their Work-roles, and that managers need to be aware of the 'whole person' in their efforts to manage their workforce holistically. As individual employees will construct role-sets according to their specific circumstances, managers must be equipped to detect individual differences for the effective construction of role-consensus in the workplace. Whilst this may appear a challenge to managers in larger organisations, respondents indicated that they only expected their organisations be aware of a small number of non-work roles they felt as important to their wellbeing. Where respondents felt as though they were treated as 'one-dimensional', they reported higher levels of stress and dissatisfaction in their working-life. A second implication for managers is that they need to remain aware of how the influences of an employee's array of non-work roles change over time. Both male and female respondents indicated that their roles tend to change over their lifetime, and that accommodations made to them by their organisation needed to similarly change to remain relevant to their wellbeing in their working-lives.

The simplicity of the role-conflict assumption.

The issue surrounding the management of role-conflict was based on ORT's failure to account for the manner in which employees actually enact their multiple-roles. Given this issue, the key themes of the 'compartmentalisation' and 'employer recognition/facilitation' inform a reconceptualisation of this assumption. Firstly, the 'compartmentalisation' theme necessitates that ORT incorporate the tendency for employees to physically separate the enactment of their non-work roles (i.e. Work-family and Work-life roles) from their Work-roles. This research found that where possible, conflicting work and non-work roles were physically separated from each other, so that the boundaries between their working and

non-working lives did not overlap. Where respondents were able to successfully compartmentalise their conflicting work and non-work roles, role-conflicts were minimised, as were reports of dissatisfaction and stress. Conversely, where respondents were unable to compartmentalise their conflicting work and non-work roles, dissatisfaction, stress, and intention to leave the workplace were reported.

Given the recognition that employees will attempt to minimise role-conflict in their working and non-working-life, the second key theme of 'employer recognition/facilitation' also informs the reconceptualisation of ORT. Specifically, where the managers assisted respondents to effectively compartmentalise conflicting roles (e.g. 'family-days' off work, not providing laptop computers so that employees were unable to work from home, etc.) satisfaction and lower stress levels were reported. As such, the ORT assumption relating to role-conflict needs to incorporate the notion that both managers and employees are able to minimise the occurrence and impact of role-conflict in the workplace. Figure 2 below represents a reconceptualisation model of ORT for the contemporary organisational context.

INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE

Research Question Two: Summary

The reconceptualised model of ORT incorporates two new tenets that emanated from the primary research described above. Firstly, the recognition that employees (both actual and potential) are multi-faceted is incorporated into the model in three important ways. In the pre-employment phase, the model now requires the employer to attain a level of understanding of the potential employee's family and non-family roles that they need to

enact for their self-validation, self recognition and overall wellbeing. In the initial employment phase, it requires that employers consider the interaction between the most important non-work-roles (as identified by the employee) and the work-roles to be bestowed upon them. Such an understanding might be gained through the incorporation of a 'role audit' system whereby the employer can ascertain the impacts each position within the organisation has on their incumbent employees' non-work roles. The outputs of such a system would arguably underpin a 'realistic job preview' for any prospective employee considering applying for, or accepting a position in the firm. It may also serve to identify causes of dysfunctional stress in the workplace that traditional systems have either ignored, or deliberately avoided.

During the employment relationship, the model requires that the performance management system (that underpins the 'role episode' assumption) be accompanied by ongoing employer recognition of the employees' multiple-role sets, an open communication system where important non-work issues can be discussed, and an opportunity to negotiate multiple-role-facilitation regimes suited to the employees' particular circumstances. Whilst seemingly an onerous task for the employer, respondents in this study consistently reported increase levels of satisfaction and commitment when they perceived their employer 'cared about their situation' (NB: it should noted that employees didn't expect their employer to know *everything* about them, but rather they felt that the employer should be aware of what their employees felt were important non-work aspects of their lives). This satisfaction and commitment extended to situations where the employee perceived their employer provided them with 'informed flexibility' that were empathetic to their non-work roles rather than the 'usual flexibility' that served as 'just another way to get to us to work harder'.

Secondly, the reconceptualised model recognises that the concept of 'compartmentalisation' needs to be included as part of ORT's 'role consensus' and 'role-conflict' assumptions. Under classical ORT, where role-conflict was apparent in the workplace, the employee had little option but to adhere to the work-role requirements of their employer, or to reject them outright by discontinuing their employment relationship. The reconceptualised model recognises that unreconciled role-conflict can be resolved through the employees' effective compartmentalisation of work and non-work roles, and that it can effectively substitute for 'role consensus' in the employment relationship. It is important however, that the implications of 'compartmentalisation' (i.e. employee self-management and control, the attainment of minimum job requirements as opposed to optimal ones) are understood, accepted and effectively managed by the employer

CONCLUSION.

The focus of this research was to review the extant ORT literature, and identify the issues seen to limit its usefulness to contemporary academics and practitioners alike. Whilst only exploratory in nature, this research did suggest that employees enacted a wide array of non-work roles that they perceived had a significant impact on their working-life. It also suggests that employees perceived a 'one-size-fits-all' HR framework does little to account for multiple-role enactment, on perceived levels of equity, and on employee job-satisfaction levels in general. This research suggests that ORT needs to incorporate the key themes of 'multi-faceted employee', 'employer recognition/facilitation' and 'compartmentalisation' into its (currently oversimplified) assumptions in order for it to serve as an effective HR policy framework. It also recommends that further investigation into ORT's role in the

workplace (and its link with work-life balance policy development in particular) be further explored to account for gender, industry, location, and other relevant effects.

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Table 1: Reported Non-Work Roles of the Respondent Group

1. Spouse (98%)	19. Sports Official (14%)
2. Parent (95%)	20. Grandchild (13%)
3. Recreational Sportsperson (71%)	21. Artist (13%)
4. Student (65%)	22. Traveller (13%)
5. Child (63%)	23. Grandparent (12%)
6. Volunteer (51%)	24. Consultant (11%)
7. Sibling (45%)	25. Neighbour (11%)
8. Friend (43%)	26. Political Advocate (10%)
9. Committee Member (32%)	27. Justice of the Peace (10%)
10. Pet Owner (30%)	28. Church Council Member (9%)
11. Aunt/Uncle (20%)	29. Flatmate (7%)
12. Self (19%)	30. Musician (6%)
13. Carer (19%)	31. Child-in-Law (6%)
14. Mentor (17%)	32. Financial Controller (5%)
15. Godparent (17%)	33. Home Maker (5%)
16. Home Renovator (17%)	34. Relative (2%)
17. Counsellor (15%)	35. Army Reserve Soldier (2%)
18. Taxi Driver (kids) (15%)	

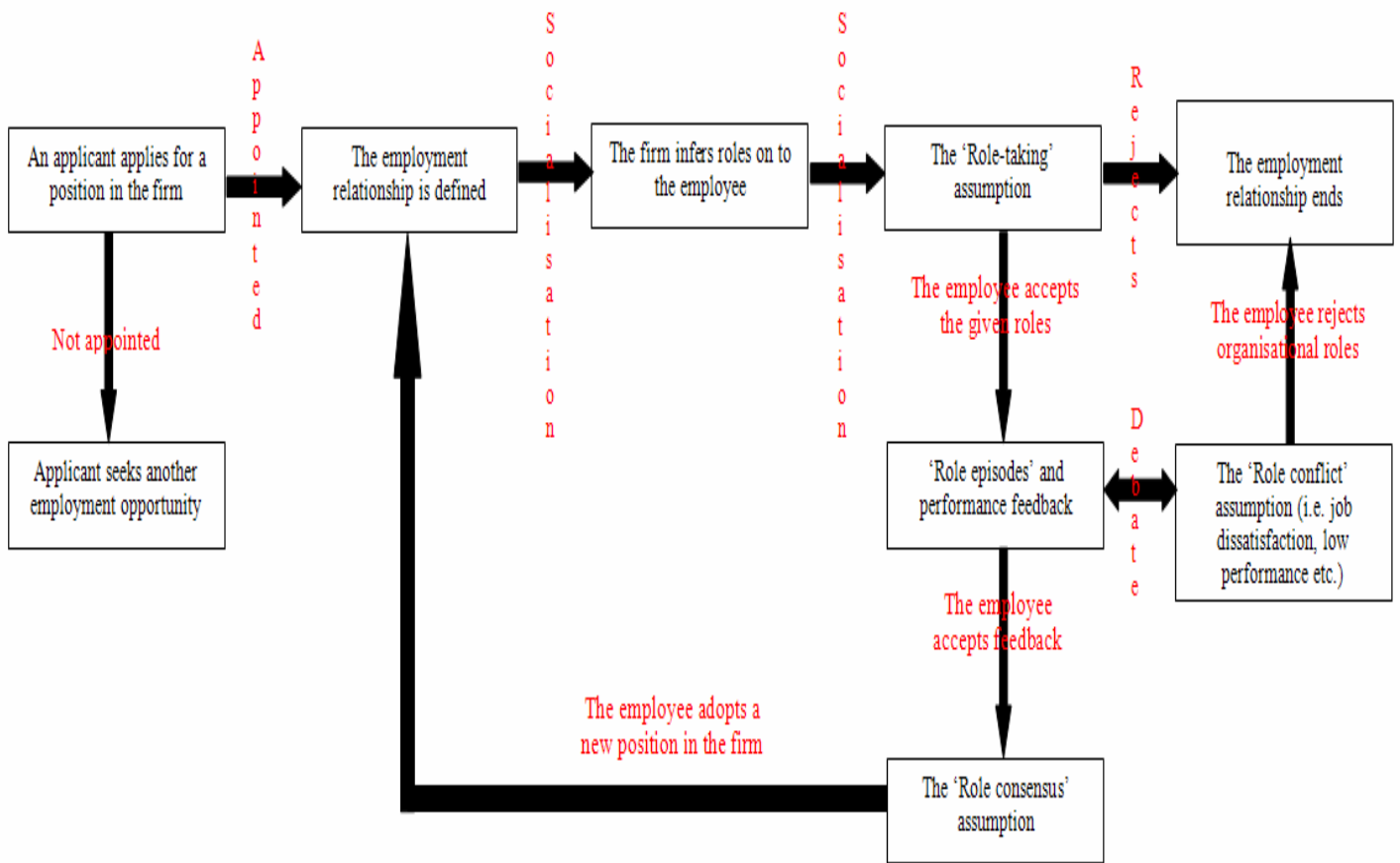Figure 1: A model of classical ORT as it relates to the employment relationship.
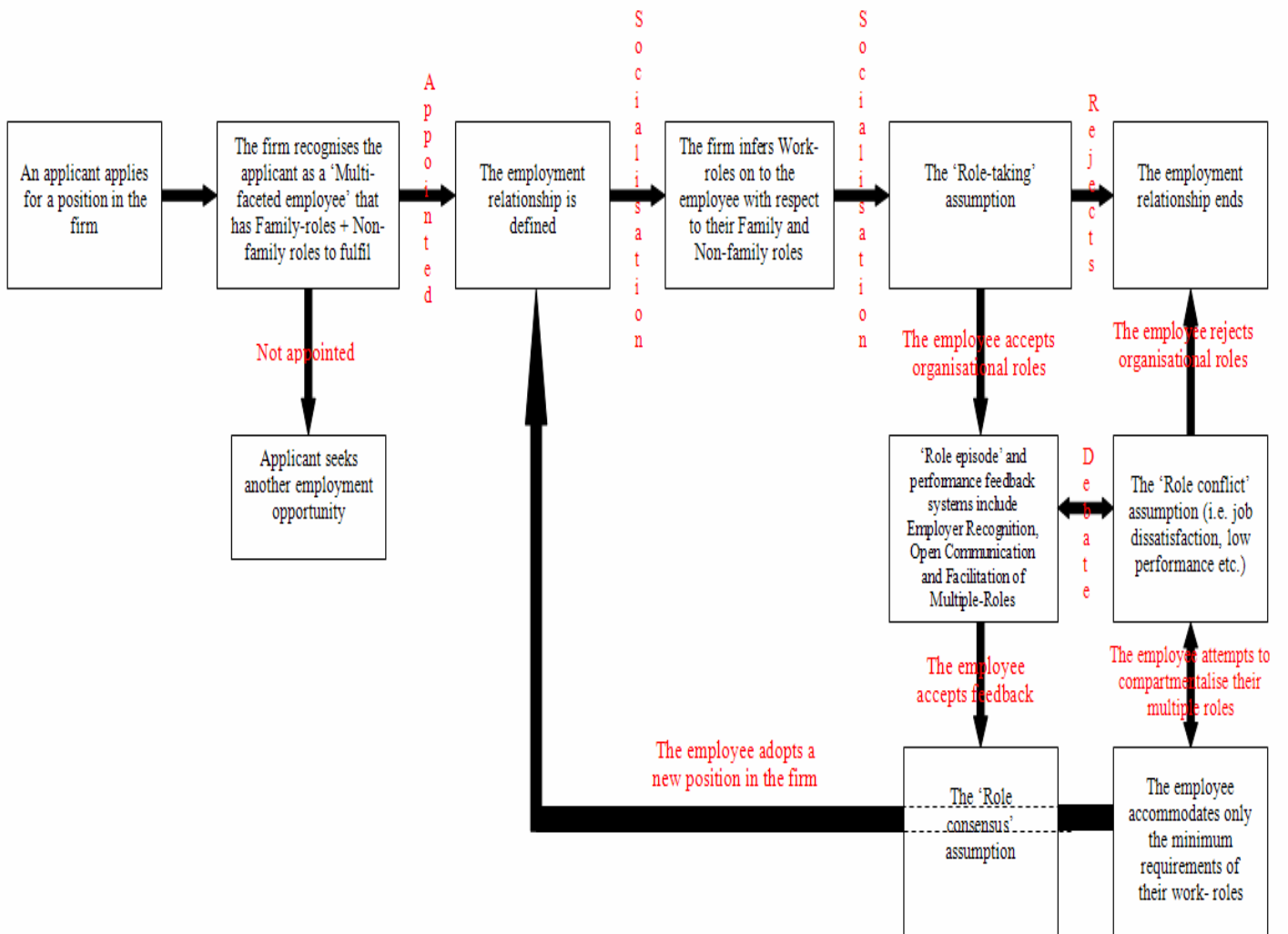
Figure 2: A reconceptualised model of ORT for the contemporary organisational context.

Appendix A: NUD*IST Index Tree: Nodes Emanating From the Literature Review

(1) Organisational Role Theory
    (1 1) The role-taking assumption
    (1 2) The role-consensus assumption
        (1 2 1) Work-family balance
        (1 2 2) Work-life balance
    (1 3) The role-compliance assumption
    (1 4) The role-conflict assumption

Appendix B: NUD*IST Index Tree: Nodes Emanating From the Primary Data Analysis

(1) Organisational Role Theory
    (1 1) The role- taking assumption
        (1 1 1) Acceptance of role
        (1 1 2) Non-acceptance of role
    (1 2) The role-consensus assumption
        (1 2 1) Work-family balance
            (1 2 1 1) Family-based roles
        (1 2 2) Work-life balance
            (1 2 2 1) Sporting-based
            (1 2 2 2) Charity-based
            (1 2 2 3) Education-based
            (1 2 2 4) Socially-based
    (1 3) The role-conflict assumption
    (1 4) Multi-faceted employees
        (1 4 1) Self-validation
        (1 4 2) Self-definition
        (1 4 3) Relationship management
    (1 5) Employer recognition/facilitation of non-work roles
        (1 5 1) Employer recognition
        (1 5 2) Open communication
        (1 5 3) Employer assistance
    (1 6) Compartmentalisation

APPENDIX C: Role Categorisation

Family-based roles
- Spouse
- Parent
- Child
- Sibling
- Grandparent
- Aunt/Uncle
- Grandchild
- Child-in-Law
- Relative
- Pet Owner
- Self
- Taxi Driver (kids)
- Home Maker

Sporting-based roles
- Recreational Sportsperson
- Sports Official

Charity-based roles
- Volunteer
- Committee Member
- Counsellor
- Consultant
- Justice of the Peace
- Financial Controller
- Carer

Education-based roles
- Student
- Mentor
- Artist
- Musician

Socially-based roles
- Friend
- Godparent
- Traveller
- Neighbour
- Political Advocate
- Church Council Member
- Flatmate
- Army Reserve Soldier
- Home Renovator

Appendix D: STAGE 1 - SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. What are the different roles you have outside your workplace?

    (e.g. "spouse", "parent", "sportsperson", "volunteer", or other position you hold that has expectations of you)

2. List the top three roles identified in Question 1 in order of their importance to you.

3. Why are these roles so important to you?

4. Do any of these roles impact upon your working life? If yes, how?

5. Does your working life impact on your non-work-life roles? If yes, how?

6. What do you do to manage the 'impact' between these roles?

7. Do you feel that your employer is aware of these impacts?

    If yes: Does your workplace accommodate the roles you identified? If yes, how?

    If no: How does this make you feel about your workplace?

8. Please specify your gender

    Male / Female

9. Please select an age group

    a) 18 - 30   b) 30 - 40   c) 40 - 50   d) 50 - 60   e) 60+

10. Which broad job category does your job fit into?

11. What industry do you work in?

Appendix E: STAGE 2 - INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Thank you for giving up your time to participate in this. As you will remember from the survey you completed the focus of my research is the identification of the non-work roles that employees have and how this impacts on their working life.

Please feel free to make any comments on anything you feel important to the subject matter these questions are attempting to cover.

1. You listed 3 roles that had an impact on your working life. Can you explain how these roles are important to you, and the manner in which they impact on your working life.

2. Is your employer aware of these impacts and do they offer any assistance in managing these impacts?

3. When you met with your employer to discuss this job did you discuss the work and non work roles and that they might impact on each other?

4. What agreement did you come to?

5. Has this happened?

6. How does this make you feel about your workplace?

7. Do you feel that these non-work roles allow you to develop skills you are able to use in the workplace to enhance your work?

8. Does your employer recognize this?

9. How does this make you feel?

10. How do you manage these impacts on your working life?

11. Do you try to keep work separate from the rest of your life as much as possible?

12. Are you successful?

13. Do you feel that your employer is aware of your efforts to minimize the impact on your working life?

14. How does this make you feel about your workplace?

15. Are there any issues, comments or observations that you would like to add to this research?

Thank you very much for your participation, time and effort. I appreciate the fact that you agreed to participate in this study.