

**JUGGLING DEMANDS: THE IMPACT OF MIDDLE MANAGER ROLES AND  
PSYCHOLOGICAL CAPITAL**

A Dissertation

Presented for the

Doctorate of Philosophy Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Laura Ternes Madden

May 2013

**Copyright © 2013 Laura Madden**

**All rights reserved.**

## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, whose support and faith in me made every moment of this process possible and even fun; to my mother, who always believed I could do it even when I was unsure; to my father, who never let me enroll in trucker school but would have supported me if I did; and to my brother, who kept me connected to the real world when I could not see past the academic one and marked all the milestones with me even when he did not understand what we were celebrating.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe a debt of gratitude to the many people who made this dissertation possible. My chair, Anne Smith, has provided invaluable guidance and support throughout my doctoral process. Anne had many roles in my doctoral education, but I am most grateful to be able to call her my mentor and my friend. I look forward to many more wine times and happy dances. I am also grateful to my committee, Dave Woehr, Lane Morris, and Stephanie Bohon, for patiently guiding and advising me through the dissertation process. I promise to stop sending panicked emails at 2 AM now. Maybe.

Many other UT faculty members also impacted my growth as an academic. Franz Kellermanns, Annette Ranft, Tim Munyon, Russell Crook, Dave Williams, Rhonda Reger, Debbie Mackie, Randal Pierce, and Cheryl Barksdale have been wonderful exemplars for me of who I want to be in my future career. In addition, I am thankful to Donde Plowman and Dennis Duchon for developing a doctoral program in which I could thrive and then mentoring me through it. I am proud to carry forward their legacy. Of course, none of this could be possible without the efforts of Glenda Hurst and Elizabeth Ferguson, who smoothed out the process for me even when I missed University deadlines or jammed the copier. In addition, I appreciate the O&S doctoral students, including Josh Ray, Adam Smith, Dori Stiefel, Mark Collins, Karen Ford-Eickhoff (KFE), Mary Beth Rousseau, Blake Mathias, Kristen Day, Kyle Turner, Nastaran Simarasl, Jason Strickling, and David Jiang, for their friendship and unwavering support. I especially appreciate my first doctoral program friend, LaDonna Thornton, for her friendship and unflagging ability to make me laugh even during marathon research weekends in the conference room.

Many people outside my UT family influenced me too. I am thankful to Jean Cash for teaching me to respect her unforgivables, which made me a far better writer. I would have

starved without Linda and her wonderful staff, so I appreciate them for nourishing me, body and soul. I am also grateful to Janetta Jamerson for keeping me from messing with other people's doorknobs and helping me to take care of myself.

Most of all, I love and appreciate Tim, my husband, best friend, academic brother, confidant, sounding board, cheerleader, advocate, and shoulder to cry on. No role conflict there! Thank you for believing in me, making me laugh, and holding me up. We all may stand on the shoulders of giants, but I get to stand beside you and nothing could be better than that.

## **ABSTRACT**

This purpose of this study is to assess the impact of middle managers' activity, role conflict, and psychological capital on their job performance and turnover intentions. Because middle managers occupy organizational positions between strategic managers at the upper levels and operational managers and employees at the lower levels of the organization, I hypothesize that they will experience role conflict that will be connected to lower job performance and higher turnover intentions. Additionally, I suggest that the negative performance impacts of role conflict are mitigated by an individual's psychological capital.

To test this moderated mediation model, this study uses a survey-based quantitative design. Using multivariate regression, I test each of the hypotheses with data gathered from 244 individuals across a variety of organizations and industries. The results indicate that middle manager activity is positively related to role conflict, which mediates the relationship between middle manager activity and two outcomes: turnover intentions and self-assessed job performance. The results of this study also indicate that an individual's psychological capital is negatively related to turnover intentions and positively related to self-assessed job performance. Additionally, although psychological capital did not moderate the relationship between role conflict and turnover intentions, it did moderate the relationship between role conflict and self-assessed job performance. None of the study hypotheses were supported in regards to managerially-assessed job performance. The study concludes with a discussion of the results generated by this test and a presentation of their theoretical and practical implications.

## Table of Contents

|                                                         |    |
|---------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Chapter 1: Introduction and Study Rationale.....        | 1  |
| Chapter 2: Literature Review .....                      | 5  |
| Role Theory .....                                       | 5  |
| Role Conflict.....                                      | 6  |
| Middle Managers .....                                   | 9  |
| Definition .....                                        | 9  |
| Theoretical and Empirical Development .....             | 10 |
| Downward Influence.....                                 | 11 |
| Facilitating .....                                      | 11 |
| Implementing .....                                      | 12 |
| Upward Influence.....                                   | 13 |
| Championing.....                                        | 14 |
| Synthesizing.....                                       | 15 |
| Hypothesis Development .....                            | 17 |
| Psychological Capital.....                              | 20 |
| Hope .....                                              | 21 |
| Optimism.....                                           | 22 |
| Resilience .....                                        | 23 |
| Self-efficacy .....                                     | 24 |
| Psychological Capital as a Higher-Order Construct ..... | 24 |
| Conclusion .....                                        | 27 |
| Chapter 3: Methods and Context .....                    | 29 |
| Samples .....                                           | 29 |
| Measures .....                                          | 30 |
| Independent Variable – Middle Manager Activity .....    | 30 |
| Mediator Variable – Role Conflict .....                 | 31 |
| Moderator Variable – Psychological Capital.....         | 31 |
| Hope .....                                              | 32 |
| Optimism.....                                           | 32 |
| Resilience .....                                        | 33 |

|                                                 |    |
|-------------------------------------------------|----|
| Self-Efficacy .....                             | 33 |
| The Psychological Capital Questionnaire .....   | 34 |
| Dependent Variables .....                       | 35 |
| Job Performance.....                            | 35 |
| Turnover Intentions.....                        | 35 |
| Control Variables .....                         | 36 |
| Procedure .....                                 | 36 |
| Chapter 4: Results .....                        | 41 |
| Descriptive Statistics.....                     | 41 |
| Hypothesis Testing.....                         | 41 |
| Turnover Intentions.....                        | 42 |
| Self-Assessed Job Performance .....             | 43 |
| Managerially-Assessed Performance.....          | 44 |
| Chapter 5: Discussion .....                     | 46 |
| Theoretical Implications .....                  | 47 |
| Turnover Intentions.....                        | 49 |
| Self-Assessed Job Performance .....             | 50 |
| Managerially-Assessed Job Performance .....     | 51 |
| Practical Implications.....                     | 53 |
| Boundary Conditions and Future Directions ..... | 54 |
| Chapter 6: Conclusion.....                      | 58 |
| List of References .....                        | 59 |
| Appendix.....                                   | 84 |
| Vita.....                                       | 99 |

## LIST OF TABLES

|                                                                                                            |    |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Table 1: Correlation Matrix with Descriptive Statistics .....                                              | 86 |
| Table 2: Regression Results for Simple Mediation for Turnover Intentions .....                             | 87 |
| Table 3: Regression Results for Conditional Indirect Effect on Turnover Intentions .....                   | 88 |
| Table 4: Regression Results for Simple Mediation for Self-Assessed Job Performance .....                   | 89 |
| Table 5: Regression Results for Conditional Indirect Effect on Self-Assessed Job Performance .....         | 90 |
| Table 6: Regression Results for Simple Mediation for Managerially-Assessed Job Performance .....           | 91 |
| Table 7: Regression Results for Conditional Indirect Effect on Managerially-Assessed Job Performance ..... | 92 |
| Table 8: Summary of Findings by Hypothesis .....                                                           | 93 |

## LIST OF FIGURES

|                                                                                                                     |    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Figure 1: Theoretical Model of Study Variables with Hypotheses.....                                                 | 94 |
| Figure 2: Coefficients and Standard Errors for Theoretical Model.....                                               | 95 |
| Figure 3: Simple Slopes for Self-Assessed Job Performance .....                                                     | 96 |
| Figure 4: Coefficients and Standard Errors for Theoretical Model for Managerially-Assessed<br>Job Performance ..... | 97 |

## **Chapter 1: Introduction and Study Rationale**

The study of role theory has a long history in organizational literature because it focuses on the idea that people's behavior is predictably different depending on their individual identities as well as the context (Biddle, 1986). Thus, as employees, individuals play specific roles in organizations and their behavior in those roles is socially-determined through others' expectations. The central problem under this theory is that those expectations can come from many different actors in the organization. Role conflict occurs when their expectations directly contradict each other and the employee is unable to meet both sets of expectations (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964), and these conflicts generate strain for the employee that can, in turn, negatively impact the organization (Miles & Perreault, 1976).

Unfortunately, certain jobs within organizations are deliberately intended to be linchpin positions in which individuals serve two groups with different expectations (Likert, 1961). In these positions, middle managers are expected to exert their influence upward towards top management and downward towards frontline managers and employees (Wooldridge & Floyd, 1990). As such, middle managers play several important roles, which, when executed well, can have significant impacts on their organizations (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1997); however, these roles can create inherent conflict for the middle manager who has to address expectations from the frontline as well as top management (Floyd & Lane, 2000). In order to meet expectations and perform their roles well, this conflict must be resolved (Katz & Kahn, 1978).

Role theory suggests that one source of resolution through which individuals can diminish the negative effects of experiencing conflict (Kahn et al., 1964) are personal factors that help the individual maneuver through role conflict (Katz & Kahn, 1978; Van Sell, Brief, & Schuler, 1981). The role theory literature that considers personal factors that impact the role

episode have looked historically at negative attitudes and behaviors such as dissatisfaction, distrust, lack of loyalty, and absenteeism (see Van Sell et al., 1981 for a review of this literature). In contrast, an emerging field of literature called Positive Organizational Behavior (POB) (Luthans, 2002a, b) considers a collection of positively-oriented personal factors that I extend to the role episode model. Specifically, POB examines psychological capital, which is defined as an individual's "positive appraisal of circumstances and probability for success based on motivated effort and perseverance" (Luthans, Avolio, Avey, & Norman, 2007b: 550). As the central focus in the study of positive organizational behavior, psychological capital is fundamental to explaining the performance benefits of positively-oriented human resource strengths and psychological capacities (Luthans, 2002a, b). By examining a combination of individuals' hope, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007b), psychological capital speaks to individual differences in perceptions of both the contexts that generate conflicts as well as the resolutions to those conflicts. Therefore, psychological capital is a key personal factor in explaining differences in individual middle managers' ability to mitigate the experience of role conflict.

The purpose of this research is to examine the relationships between these organizational and individual factors that affect middle managers' experience of role conflict. Therefore, I explore the questions: 1) do the upward and downward influencing activities expected of middle managers generate role conflict?, 2) what are the performance outcomes of this experience of role conflict?, and 3) does psychological capital help to alleviate the negative consequences of role conflict? I address these questions in several ways using a quantitative investigation within and across organizations. First, I capture valuable information about the activities that contribute to role conflict by surveying middle managers about their perceptions of role conflict.

Additionally, by surveying executives about their subordinate middle managers' performance, I evaluate the outcomes of role conflict. Finally, by exploring a moderated mediation model (Edwards & Lambert, 2007), I investigate the mechanisms that allow middle managers to offset the negative impacts of role conflict.

By doing so, I offer contributions to several literatures. First, role theorists have suggested that the interpersonal process of setting and meeting behavioral expectations is influenced by personal factors (Kahn et al., 1964), the study of which has diminished in recent years. By exploring the moderating role of psychological capital on the negative outcomes of middle managers' role conflict, I suggest that nascent bodies of positively-oriented research can offer new insights into the study of those personal factors. Second, the middle manager perspective has investigated the organizational contributions made by middle managers through a variety of methodological lenses, which has fragmented this stream of research (Wooldridge, Schmid, & Floyd, 2008). By exploring the contextual and personal factors that impact middle managers' performance, I suggest that role theory offers a more holistic view of the middle manager experience. Third, positive organizational behavior has focused on exploring the antecedents and outcomes of individual's psychological capital (Luthans et al., 2007b) to the detriment of theoretical explanation of the benefit of such capital. By investigating a mechanism through which middle managers can lessen the negative effects of role conflict, I suggest that role theory offers such a theoretical lens through which to study individuals' psychological capital.

In the next section, I begin to address my research questions through a review of the literature streams related to role theory with an emphasis on the antecedents and consequences of role conflict. I then review the literature that documents middle managers' upward and

downward influence in organizations as well as the intermediate goals they address with their influence. Next, I describe the literature that explores positive organizational behavior and the development and exploration of psychological capital as its core construct. Subsequently, I present a model that unifies these literatures through their focal constructs and describe the hypothetical relationships between them. Following a description of the sample, measures, and procedures used to empirically test this model, I present the results of that test. Finally, I discuss the theoretical and practical implications of this study and suggest promising avenues for future research.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

This chapter focuses on developing a theoretical framework to examine the research problem addressed in this study. First, I present a summary of role theory to frame a discussion of one of its key constructs: role conflict. Second, I describe a population susceptible to role conflict problems: middle managers. Third, I suggest a mechanism by which middle managers can assuage the conflict inherent in their roles: psychological capital. Finally, from these three streams of research, I develop a specific model of middle managers' experience of role conflict that forms the basis of the empirical portion of this study.

### **Role Theory**

At its broadest, role theory examines patterns of human behavior (Biddle, 1979). These patterns, termed roles, are associated with positions in a social framework (Oeser & Harary, 1964; Winship & Mandel, 1983) such that roles evidence similarities across people and contexts. Because roles are socially derived, role occupants often determine how to behave from the expectations of their roles (Katz & Kahn, 1978). As such, role expectations explain much of role behavior (Allen & van de Vliert, 1984; Bates & Harvey, 1975) and form the basis of many definitions of roles (see Biddle, 1979 for a review of role definitions).

However, in organizational studies, these expectations can be sourced from different groups within and outside of an organization (Banton, 1965; Gross, Mason, & MacEachern, 1958; Neiman & Hughes, 1951). Within the organization, role expectations can be derived either from specific hierarchical positions that are preplanned, task-oriented, and clearly defined, or they can be interpreted from more covert sources such as pressures from informal groups (Biddle, 1979). Additionally, characteristics of the role occupant's personality can determine

their role behaviors (Graen, 1976), which explains variation in the behaviors evidenced by people who occupy the same roles (Van Sell, Brief, & Schuler, 1981).

These sundry sources for role expectations can breed confusion related to the normative guidelines that determine role behavior when antithetical expectations of behavior lead to role conflict (Kahn et al., 1964). Because of the damaging personal and organizational impacts of these types of role stress, role conflict has received considerable attention in the organizational behavior literature (Fisher & Gitelson, 1983; Jackson & Schuler, 1985).

### **Role Conflict**

Role conflict, defined as the incompatibility or incongruity of the expectations associated with a role (Katz & Kahn, 1978), first surfaced in theoretical developments of role strain (Levinson, 1959), which develops from multiple relationships with diverse role partners and can create impediments to meeting role demands (Goode, 1960). Kahn and his colleagues (1964) developed a role episode model to explain sources of role strain. Their model focuses on the interpersonal process that unfolds between the focal individual who receives expectations and the people who send those expectations, termed role senders, and includes several organizational, personal, and interpersonal factors that affect the role episode. Role senders, who can be anyone inside or outside the organization with whom the focal individual has a relationship, are most affected by organizational factors such as organizational level, structure, and practices in addition to task characteristics and physical settings. Personal factors, such as status, education, age, or tenure, of both role senders and focal individuals also affect the role episode. Finally, interpersonal factors between the role sender and the focal individual include mode and frequency of interaction, visibility, physical location, and feedback.

The exploration of this role episode model led to many theoretical claims about organizations as role-systems (Katz & Kahn, 1978) that require individuals to perform certain roles in order to achieve desired outcomes. As such, work roles help to align individuals with group- and organization-level goals that guide their behavior, in addition to providing the organization with necessary stability and predictability (Biddle, 1986). Even though individuals have idiosyncratic goals, in their work roles, their behavior is more certain and interchangeable, such that individuals may leave the organization, but the work role remains and expectations of that work role help to guide the next individual who assumes that role (Katz & Kahn, 1978). Thus, role conflict, which arises when role senders' expectations diverge from one another in ways that cannot be reconciled by the focal individual, poses a serious threat to both the focal individual and the organization. Consequently, many negative responses to role conflict have been documented, including lower organizational commitment (Baird, 1969), less confidence in the organization (Kahn et al., 1964) and higher levels of job anxiety (Hamner & Tosi, 1974); however, two of the most studied outcomes of role conflict are job performance and job satisfaction.

Job performance has received considerable attention in the role conflict literature, although the results are mixed. Theoretically, role conflict is assumed to lower performance because role conflict stems from incompatible expectations, which focal individuals must choose between in order to accomplish work goals. This decision between incompatible demands necessarily means that the focal individual ineffectively addresses the demands set forth by at least one role sender; thus, high levels of role conflict are likely to result in lower levels of job performance. Despite the theoretical foundations, early empirical explorations of this relationship produced inconsistencies; significant negative findings (Bagozzi, 1978; Michaels, Day, &

Joachimsthaler, 1987; Szilagyi, 1977) and non-significant findings (Bedeian, Armenakis, & Curran, 1981; Sieber, 1974; Stumpf & Rabinowitz, 1981) emerged regarding the impact of role conflict on job performance. As a result, this relationship has been the focus of several meta-analyses that have found weak, negative effects of role conflict on job performance (Fisher & Gitelson, 1983; Jackson & Schuler, 1985; Örtqvist & Wincent, 2006; Tubre & Collins, 2000).

On the other hand, job satisfaction, the positive or negative affective response individuals have to their jobs (Locke, 1976), has been more unequivocally connected to role conflict. Many empirical studies have found evidence that role conflict negatively impacts job performance (Aldag & Brief, 1978; Bedeian & Armenakis, 1981; Behrman & Perreault, 1984; Coverman, 1989; Ivancevich, Matteson, & Preston, 1982; Gregson & Wendell, 1994; Jackson, 1983; Rousseau, 1978). This finding supports propositions that role conflict generates unpleasant and uncomfortable situations that lead focal individuals to become disillusioned with their work (Walker, Churchill, & Ford, 1975). As an extension of this research, several scholars have suggested that individuals will leave positions in which role conflict is too high or persists for too long (Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Babin & Boles, 1998). In a longitudinal study of this proposition, role conflict was found to lead to voluntary turnover (Johnson & Graen, 1973), a finding that also supports the causality suggested in cross-sectional research that found links between role conflict and turnover (Brief & Aldag, 1976; Lyons, 1971).

The overwhelming bulk of this literature indicates that role conflict has negative outcomes for individuals. The logical assertion that flows from this literature is that organizations should seek to minimize their employees' experience of role conflict in order to maximize positive returns (Biddle, 1986; Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970). However, some positions within organizations are deliberately intended to handle competing demands from

diverse hierarchical groups. Specifically, middle managers occupy a linchpin position within organizations from which they are expected to address the needs of their top managers as well as their frontline managers and employees (Likert, 1961). The next section describes these key organizational members and their functions within their organizations.

## **Middle Managers**

### **Definition**

Key definitions of middle managers focus on their hierarchical location between the organization's top strategic and lower operational levels (e.g., Currie & Procter, 2005; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1997). Further studies refine this positional definition as being at the intermediate level of the hierarchy (Uyterhoven, 1972), two or three levels down from top managers (Wooldridge & Floyd, 1990) and one level above front-line managers, a point from which they "supervise supervisors and are supervised by others" (Dutton & Ashford, 1993: 398). Other definitions hinge on middle managers in relation to other managerial levels of the firm; for instance, Schendel and Hofer (1979) focused on middle managers as implementers of strategy designed by top managers, while Bower (1970) depicted middle managers as advocates for their subordinates' strategic issues. In contrast, middle managers are also defined by their access to the frontline's day-to-day knowledge as well as top management's strategic plans (Nonaka, 1988, 1994). Many scholars further restrict their definitions of middle managers to specific contexts such as strategic renewal (Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Floyd & Lane, 2000) or change (Burgelman, 1991; Huy, 2002), during which middle managers have essential functions that determine organizational adaptation and survival. This wealth of theoretical development has both helped and hindered middle management literature (Pappas & Wooldridge, 2007; Wooldridge, Schmid, & Floyd, 2008), which has the benefit of many empirical and theoretical

studies as well as the fragmentation (Dopson & Stewart, 1990) that comes from such varied definitions. For the purposes of this study, I adopt Beck and Plowman's (2009: 912) comprehensive definition:

“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.”

### **Theoretical and Empirical Development**

Mintzberg's (1978) framework for realized strategy, which diverged from earlier work that conceptualized strategy as a process in which top managers made decisions about strategy that the front line then acted upon and implemented, represented a crucial development for middle management literature. This concept of realized strategy foreshadowed an acknowledgement of middle and lower levels' emergent influence on strategy in addition to the upper level's deliberate influence (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985). The subsequent literature on middle managers is therefore rooted in strategic management and aimed at determining the barriers to and facilitators of strategy planning and implementation (e.g., Wooldridge & Floyd, 1990). Early development of middle managerial functions noted the importance of linchpin agents in organizations who occupy unique positions in the chain of command between front-line

employees and top management team members (Likert, 1961). Bower (1970: 297) notes that “middle managers are the only men in an organization in a position to judge whether issues are being considered in the proper context,” implying that only middle managers have the hierarchical position necessary to view both strategy formulation and implementation. Likewise, Burgelman (1983a: 1349) called the middle manager “crucial” for sponsoring front-line strategic initiatives and designing new strategy. Thus, studies from the middle manager perspective share the fundamental premise that middle managers are central to explaining organizational outcomes of interest (Wooldridge et al., 2008). Given the importance of these key players in organizational strategy formulation and implementation, as well as the position they occupy between lower and upper levels of the organization, much of the theoretical and empirical study of middle managers hinges on their influence as upward or downward.

### ***Downward Influence***

Fundamentally, middle managers’ downward influence involves aligning the lower levels of the organization with the strategic context established in the upper levels (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992b; Nutt, 1987; Schendel & Hofer, 1979). The direct and indirect mechanisms through which middle managers exert downward influence are often represented as facilitating and implementing (Floyd & Lane, 2000; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992b, 1997).

#### **Facilitating**

Defined initially as the facilitation of organizational adaptability that fostered flexible organizational arrangements (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992b), the conceptualization of facilitating was later enlarged to incorporate the encouragement middle managers offer to their subordinates to undertake more experimental activities such as idea generation (Wooldridge et al., 2008). Because of the focus on organizational flexibility, many studies of middle managers’ facilitating

focus on change events and adaptability; for instance, Chakravarthy (1982) suggests that organizational adaptability is facilitated when members are encouraged to anticipate oncoming change and experiment with new approaches. Additionally, by promoting information-sharing and learning, middle managers increase their subordinates' ability to deal with change (Nonaka, 1994). In fact, middle managers were found to engage in an emotional balancing process in which they attended to subordinates' negative emotions and helped them cope with radical change (Huy, 2002). As such, this form of managerial function is best accomplished through more transformational leadership styles than transactional ones; transformational middle managers who focus on people and organizational issues were found to be more effective at introducing technological change than were transactional middle managers who focused on fixing technical issues (Beatty & Lee, 1992). Given the beneficial emergent outcomes, middle managers' facilitating is clearly an important activity in organizations.

### Implementing

As "managerial interventions that align organizational action with strategic intentions" (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992b: 155), implementing is a key activity for middle managers. In fact, many organizations and studies cite this activity as middle managers' key organizational function (Nutt, 1987; Schendel & Hofer, 1979). A key variable affecting the efficacy of middle managers' implementation of strategy is the level of involvement they experience in the creation of the strategy. Although middle managers may participate in strategy making in different ways than top managers (Mantere & Vaara, 2008), organizational structure and hierarchy can contribute to the exclusion of some groups from the strategy planning process (Carney, 2004) to adverse individual and organizational ends. Middle managers who perceived that they were excluded from conversations about strategy also reported feeling demotivated and alienated (Westley,

1990), and less committed to strategic goals (Jarzabkowski & Balogun, 2009). Additionally, in the absence of continued involvement with upper management during strategic implementation efforts, middle managers develop different responses in shaping organizational change (Balogun & Johnson, 2004), thereby contributing to detrimental strategic dissensus. Conversely, middle manager involvement in strategic planning has been found to increase goal congruence among middle managers (Ketokivi & Castañer, 2004). Moreover, organizations were found to experience better financial performance when middle managers were more involved in strategic planning (Wooldridge & Floyd, 1990). Thus, middle managers' implementing activities are crucial to organizations.

Although middle managers' downward influences can affect the organization's ability to align itself with the external environment (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992b), their influence in this direction can also impact the organization's adaptability and consensus about strategy. By facilitating learning, middle managers impact their subordinates' coping (Huy, 2002) and experimenting (Chakravarthy, 1982) abilities, making the organization more adaptable. Through involvement with upper-level management and strategy creation, middle managers directly impact the organization's success in realizing strategy and any associated performance effects (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1997). In both activities, middle managers impact their subordinates' and the larger organization's ability to contend with change.

### ***Upward Influence***

Following Mintzberg's (1978) work, many scholars began to focus on middle managers' upward influence. To encapsulate the body of research from other scholars into a cohesive framework, these behaviors are often categorized as championing and synthesizing (Floyd & Lane, 2000; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992b, 1997). Floyd and his colleagues note that middle

managers synthesize when they interpret front-line information and disseminate it to upper-level management. Championing is a more active behavior in which middle managers use their front-line information to influence change and to encourage revisions of upper-level management's thinking about strategy. Both before and after Floyd and Wooldridge's (1992b, 1997) seminal work, many studies have examined middle managers' championing and synthesizing.

### Championing

Defined as "the persistent and persuasive communication of strategic option to upper management" (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992b: 155), championing was first described in Bower's (1970) account of how middle managers choose and cultivate some projects so as to advocate for the successful ones to upper management. Burgelman's (1983b: 229) process studies of internal corporate venturing designated these middle manager activities as "championing," to indicate that the projects adopted by middle managers were initiated at the operating level; in fact, one network analysis study found evidence that middle managers' positions in the organizational network facilitate their organizational championing activities (Hutt, Reigen, & Ronchetto, 1988). The same study showed the creation of a strategy during one frontline manager's conversation with a customer being passed to a middle manager who cultivated the idea with other managers in his network, one of whom became the champion for the idea to upper management. This idea of key champions received further development when Fulop (1991) suggested that successful champions are those middle managers who are able to challenge current strategy by recognizing and advocating for new opportunities, while less successful champions are those middle managers who only advocate within the confines of extant strategy. In support of this, a study of 158 accounts of championing across 12 organizations found that championing activity was enabled at higher levels by more creative freedom to identify and conceptualize new

opportunities, while middle managers at lower levels were inhibited by the same lack of structure (Mantere, 2005). Through these studies we can see that championing is a key middle manager activity for creating and moving information and strategy upward in organizations.

### Synthesizing

Synthesis is defined as the interpretation and evaluation of information that affects top management perspectives (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992b). The study of middle managers' upward influence as synthesizers of front-line information received significant development from a stream of research that focused on middle managers as strategic issue sellers. Termed issue-selling (Dutton & Ashford, 1993), this research extends from the axiom that upper-level managements' time and attention are both essential and limited resources in an organization; consequently, middle managers exert influence on strategy in terms of which strategic issues they choose to present to upper-level management. To date, issue-selling research has largely focused on exploring individual characteristics and organizational features that impact the success of middle managers' issue-selling.

First, issue-selling can be affected by characteristics of individual middle managers, such as their culture and previous experience. Ling, Floyd, and Baldrige (2005) proposed that the cultural background of local subsidiary managers in multinational firms can affect which cues they use to determine whether or not to sell issues in addition to how they sell those issues. As an extension of this proposition, subsidiaries managed by the parent company have been found to be better able to attract the parent company's attention than are subsidiaries with managers from a foreign host country (Gammelgaard, 2009). Second, a manager's broad previous experience with the company and specific previous experience issue-selling have both been found to affect future issue-selling. An individual manager's background in the company was found to be significantly

related to performance (Mair, 2005), perhaps because, over time, middle managers accrue assets that enable them to better sell issues (Howard-Grenville, 2007). Additionally, middle managers can adapt their issue-selling based on previous issue-selling events to increase the likelihood that top management will pay attention to those issues (Howard-Grenville, 2007).

Second, the success of an issue-selling attempt can be affected by organizational features, including top management support and organizational culture. The studies that looked at top management support were initiated by the suggestion that lower-level employees in an organization will be more likely to sell issues when they perceive the upper-level management as open-minded and supportive (Schilit & Locke, 1982). This idea found supported in a study that further found that the leadership style used by an organization's top managers significantly affects how the same organization's middle managers sell issues (Ansari & Kapoor, 1987). Similarly, a proposition that middle managers would sell issues more frequently when they perceived top management to be more supportive (Dutton & Ashford, 1993) was later supported in a study that found that the overall context of the organization, specifically a supportive culture coupled with top management's willingness to listen, impacts when, where, and how middle managers sell issues to top managers (Dutton, Ashford, O'Neill, Hayes, & Wierba, 1997). This theme emerged again in a study of issue-selling events in which successful events were those in which interviewees gathered involvement and support from immediate supervisors as well as upper-level managers (Dutton, Ashford, O'Neill, & Lawrence, 2001). The importance of upward connections was reconfirmed in a study that found that middle managers are more willing to sell issues when they have relationships founded on trust with key organizational decision-makers (Ashford, Rothbard, Piderit, & Dutton, 1998).

A more widely supportive culture can also impact issue-selling. One study found that the exclusivity of the organization's culture impacts middle managers' willingness to sell issues; female employees were found to be more willing to sell issues related to gender-based pay equity to top management when the organization has a gender-inclusive culture in which women are included in everyday experiences and decision-making (Dutton, Ashford, Lawrence, & Miner-Rubino, 2002). Together, these studies show the crucial organizational features that impact the efficacy of middle managers' issue-selling.

Middle managers' upward influence is a key mechanism through which strategy can emerge in organizations differently than they were initially conceptualized (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1997). By synthesizing, middle managers interpret and present vital information about the organization's internal and external environment to upper-level management. By championing, middle managers advocate for and deliver opportunities to upper-level management that could increase organizational performance. Both functions showcase middle managers' ability to affect and change their organization's strategic course.

### **Hypothesis Development**

Although much of the literature in the middle management perspective has focused on the importance of middle managers' roles to the organization, those roles also impact the individual middle manager, a topic that has received less scholarly focus (Mair, 2005). In light of this oversight, this study explores the performance effects of middle managers' experiences of role conflict. Drawing from research on the hierarchical linchpin position of middle managers in their organizations (e.g., Floyd & Lane, 2000; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992b, 1997), I suggest that when middle managers engage in facilitating, implementing, championing, and synthesizing, they will experience role conflict. Because role conflict happens when role senders have

competing demands of focal individuals (Kahn et al., 1964), I further suggest that any amount of middle manager activity will result in role conflict for the focal individual. This means that whether middle managers engage in a single activity or multiple activities, they will experience role conflict generated by the inability to meet expectations from the frontline and top management role senders in their organizations. In other words, a middle manager who only focuses on downward-influencing activity, such as facilitating, is likely to experience role conflict because of a failure to address top management's expectations of championing and synthesizing. Likewise, a middle manager who attempts to engage in multiple upward- and downward-influencing activities, such as implementing and championing, is likely to experience role conflict because the demands and expectations of each activity compete with each other. Thus, I hypothesize:

*Hypothesis 1: Middle manager activity will be positively related to role conflict.*

Further, given the variety of negative individual and organizational outcomes associated with the experience of role conflict (Jackson & Schuler, 1985; Fisher & Gitelson, 1983), coupled with the importance of middle managers to their organizations (Wooldridge & Floyd, 1990; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992b, 1997), I suggest that role conflict mediates the relationship between middle manager activity and performance outcomes. To address key debates in the role conflict literature, I include job performance as well as turnover intentions.

Turnover intentions are one of the most important predictors of voluntary turnover (Griffeth, Hom & Gaertner, 2000; Hom, Caranikas-Walker, Prussia, & Griffeth, 1992; Hom & Griffeth, 1995; Mobley, Griffeth, Hand & Meglino, 1979), because intent is the final step in a cognitive process by which employees withdraw from their positions and organizations (Bannister & Griffeth, 1986; Hom & Griffeth, 1991; Mobley, Horner, & Hollingsworth, 1978).

Turnover intentions represent statements about specific behaviors related to organizational withdrawal (Lum, Kervin, Clark, Reid, & Sirola, 1998); even more than cognitions related to turnover, turnover intentions indicate an employee's actions and behaviors to stay or leave their current organization. Further, turnover intentions have been found to be related to role conflict (Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Babin & Boles, 1998; Brief & Aldag, 1976; Hamner & Tosi, 1974; Örtqvist & Wincent, 2006). For this reason, this study focuses on turnover intentions rather than turnover itself because turnover intentions capture both an individual's perception and consideration of alternatives to their jobs (Lum et al., 1998; Mobley et al., 1979). By focusing on the relationship between role conflict and turnover intentions, this study can examine the impact of role conflict on both the attitudes and motives of focal individuals who are considering withdrawal. Thus, I hypothesize:

*Hypothesis 2a: Role conflict will mediate the relationship between middle manager activity and turnover intentions.*

The proposed negative relationship between role conflict and job performance is well-documented, but the evidence is mixed (Jackson & Schuler, 1985; Tubre & Collins, 2000). Most studies hypothesize a negative relationship between role conflict and job performance on the basis that role conflict presents the focal individual with expectations that are nearly impossible to reconcile and satisfactorily meet; thus, any action taken is likely to be inefficient or insufficient (Biddle, 1986). However, evidence of this relationship is limited. Jackson and Schuler's (1985) meta-analysis found only three tests with weak relationships between job performance and role conflict. Fifteen years later, Tubre and Collins (2000) found 54 correlations in the literature, but likewise could determine no conclusive relationship. They suggest that unidentified moderators may be convoluting findings related to the job performance

and role conflict relationship; thus, job performance is included here to address their call for additional research into that relationship and potential moderators. Moreover, previous theory suggests that the relationship between role conflict and job performance is negative because individuals who experience role conflict are less able to meet expectations satisfactorily and therefore will have lower appraisals of performance. Accordingly, given the previously hypothesized relationship between middle manager activity and role conflict, I hypothesize:

*Hypothesis 2b: Role conflict will mediate the relationship between middle manager activity and job performance.*

Although role conflict has been shown to lower levels of job performance and raise turnover intentions, and middle managers are expected to have higher levels of role conflict than other groups in the organization because of their position between two competing hierarchical levels (Floyd & Lane, 2000), research has shown that some middle managers are more effective than others (Beatty & Lee, 1992; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1997; Fulop, 1991). In the next section, I explore this anomaly by describing a potential moderator that can enable middle managers to dissipate the negative effects of the role conflict they experience.

## **Psychological Capital**

Psychological capital has been broadly defined as “one’s positive appraisal of circumstances and probability for success based on motivated effort and perseverance” (Luthans, Avolio, Avey, & Norman, 2007: 550) and reflects growing interest in the study of positive phenomena in organizations (Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003; Luthans, 2002a). As an individual-level measure (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007), psychological capital fits into a nascent body of research on positive organizational behavior (Luthans, 2002a; Luthans et al., 2007a,b; Luthans & Youssef, 2007), defined as “the study and application of positively oriented

human resource strengths and psychological capacities that can be measured, developed and effectively managed for performance improvement” (Luthans, 2002b: 59). The idea of performance improvement is an important inclusion criterion for the foundational dimensions of psychological capital (Luthans et al., 2007a); each dimension has established connections from organizational, psychological, or sociological foundations to performance metrics of interest to organizational scholars. These dimensions that comprise psychological capital represent four specific positively-oriented strengths and capacities: hope, optimism, resiliency, and self-efficacy.

### **Hope**

Hope is defined as an individual’s positive expectation for goal attainment (Stotland, 1969). More specifically, hope has two goal-directed components: agency and pathways (Snyder, 1994). The first component, agency, refers to the motivation that underlies an individual’s desire to reach his or her goals (Snyder et al., 1991b). This agency fuels an individual’s belief that he or she can begin and sustain the process to reach a goal. The second component, the pathway, references an individual’s ability to identify plausible routes to the goal (Snyder, 1994). Moreover, hopeful individuals identify alternate pathways to sustain their hope in the face of blocked pathways; individuals high in hope produce more possible pathways to their goals than do individuals low in hope (Irving, Snyder, & Crowson, 1998). Taken in concert, these components show hope to be a multifaceted state in which individuals both believe that they have the will to succeed as well as the ability to find a way to success (Snyder, 2000).

Hope has been widely explored in the psychology literature, which has connected hope to a variety of positive outcomes related to academics (Onwuegbuzie & Snyder, 2000; Snyder, Lopez, Shorey, Rand, & Feldman, 2003), athletics (Curry, Snyder, Cook, Ruby, & Rehm, 1997),

and health (Barnum, Snyder, Rapoff, Mani & Thompson, 1998; Snyder, Irving, & Anderson, 1991). Within the organizational literature, hope is a promising new avenue through which to study differences in employees' motivations to reach their task- and job-related goals. This new stream of research has demonstrated that high-hope individuals have higher levels of job satisfaction (Peterson & Luthans, 2003), organizational commitment (Larson & Luthans, 2006), vocational competencies (Wandeler & Bundick, 2011), job performance (Peterson & Byron, 2008), work happiness (Youssef & Luthans, 2007) and merit salary increases (Luthans, Avolio, Walumbwa, & Li, 2005). Organizations can reap the benefits of hopeful employees too; organizations comprised of individuals higher in hope were more successful than their counterparts with lower-hope employees (Adams et al., 2003). Given these demonstrated positively-oriented strengths, hope forms an important cornerstone of psychological capital.

## **Optimism**

Like hope, optimism addresses an individual's view of positive outcomes. As such, optimistic individuals believe they have the power and control to create positive outcomes in their lives and take personal credit for those events (Seligman, 1998; Luthans et al., 2007a). Thus, an optimistic person "attributes positive events to personal, permanent, and pervasive causes" (Luthans et al., 2007b: 91-92). Research has linked optimism to increased well-being (Peterson, 2000; Scheier & Carver, 1987, 1992), improved coping abilities (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Scheier & Carver, 1985), and lower levels of distress before, during, and after illnesses (Allison, Guichard, & Gilain, 2000; Carver et al., 1993; Fitzgerald, Tennen, Affleck, & Pransky, 1993; Shnek, Irvine, Stewart, & Abbey, 2001; Stanton & Snider, 1993). Optimism has also demonstrated positive relationships to desirable outcomes in organizations. One study found that individuals who reported being optimistic had improved performance (Seligman, 1998) as well

as higher performance evaluations (Luthans et al., 2005) and job satisfaction (Youssef & Luthans, 2007), and. On the organizational level, optimistic TMTs were found to have higher rates of income growth (Peterson, Smith, Martorana, & Owens, 2003). Because of its focus on internal attributions of success as well as the demonstrated achievement of such successes, optimism is a key dimension of psychological capital.

## **Resilience**

Within research on psychological capital, resilience is studied as the “positive psychological capacity to rebound ... from adversity, uncertainty, conflict, failure, or even positive change, progress and increased responsibility” (Luthans, 2002a: 702). This definition exhibits psychological capital’s roots in positive psychology research, which regards resilience as a mechanism through which individuals cope with adverse life events in order to return to more stable situations (Richardson, 2002). Through the upward spiral (Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002) and broaden-and-build theoretical lenses (Fredrickson, 1998, 2001), resilience is hypothesized to grow through exposure to negative events, meaning that individuals become more resilient every time they effectively recover from an adverse event (Luthans et al., 2007a).

Several empirical tests of these claims in organizational research offer support of individual-level benefits. During one documented change event, individuals’ high in resilience were found to have higher levels of performance (Luthans et al., 2005). Similarly, during a downsizing, the resilient individuals were better able to maintain their performance and experienced fewer mental and physical illness symptoms (Maddi, 1987). Likewise, resiliency has been related to job satisfaction (Larson & Luthans, 2006) as well as commitment and happiness (Youssef & Luthans, 2007). Additionally, many anecdotal accounts exist regarding the proposed impact of resilience on individual performance across a variety of contexts (Coutu, 2002;

Harland, Harrison, Jones, & Reiter-Palmon, 2005; Luthans et al., 2005; Luthans, Vogelgesang, & Lester, 2006; Zunz, 1998). As such, resiliency describes a key source of an individual's strength and is thus a valuable dimension of psychological capacity.

### **Self-efficacy**

In the workplace, self-efficacy indicates an individual's "conviction or confidence about his or her abilities to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources or courses of action needed to successfully execute a specific task within a given context" (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998b: 66). This contextual boundary is key to the definition of self-efficacy; an individual's self-efficacy hinges on how he or she deals with "prospective situations" (Bandura, 1982: 122). Self-efficacy has perhaps the most empirical foundational work of all of the dimensions in psychological capital; three meta-analyses support a strong, positive relationship between self-efficacy and performance (Judge & Bono, 2001; Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998a; Sadri & Robertson, 1993). These strong connections and clear definitions help to explain self-efficacy's inclusion as a fundamental dimension of psychological capital.

### **Psychological Capital as a Higher-Order Construct**

Although each of these four dimensions has its own related stream of research, together they form the higher-order construct of psychological capital. As such, psychological capital must be distinctive from other constructs from similar theoretical backgrounds (Judge, Van Vianen, & DePater, 2004; Schwab, 1980). One of the fundamental differences between psychological capital and other constructs within positive psychology and positive organizational research is that psychological capital is a state-like construct that is "relatively malleable and open to development" (Luthans et al., 2007a: 544). In contrast, many of the key constructs from

positive psychology and positive organizational research are trait-like and demonstrate stability over time and generality across individuals (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005).

Additionally, each of the dimensions of psychological capital has evidenced strong psychometric properties such as construct and discriminant validities (Bryant & Cvengros, 2004; Carifio & Rhodes, 2002; Magaletta & Oliver, 1999; Youssef & Luthans, 2007); however, the underlying common link between these dimensions forms the foundation of psychological capital as a higher-order factor that make a unique, testable contribution of its own (Luthans et al., 2005, 2007a). This common link unites the dimensions to make them more impactful together than separately and thus creates the motivation for the study of psychological capital. “By considering self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience as important facets of [psychological capital] rather than focusing on any one individual facet in particular, we expect their combined motivational effects will be broader and more impactful than any one of the constructs individually” (Luthans et al., 2007a: 550). Initial research on psychological capital focused on testing this claim that the effects of the united dimensions would have more impact than the separated constructs, and found support to suggest that psychological capital has higher-order impacts on individuals’ performance (Luthans et al., 2005, Luthans, Avey, Avolio, & Peterson, 2010; Rego, Marques, Leal, Sousa, & Cunha, 2010), job satisfaction (Luthans et al., 2007a), and commitment (Luthans, Norman, Avolio, & Avey, 2008). Further, individuals high in psychological capital are less likely to be involuntarily absent for reasons such as physical or psychological illness (Avey, Patera, & West, 2006), and are more likely to engage in organizational citizenship behaviors when they identified with the organization (Norman, Avey, Nimmicht, & Pigeon, 2010). Because of the strong association between psychological capital and positive individual outcomes, I hypothesize:

*Hypothesis 3a: Psychological capital will be negatively related to turnover intentions.*

*Hypothesis 3b: Psychological capital will be positively related to job performance.*

As mentioned above, an individual's turnover intentions capture attitudes and perceptions about his or her job as well as alternatives to it (Lum et al., 1998; Mobley et al., 1979); thus, the moderating effects of psychological capital should extend to the relationship between role conflict and an individual's turnover intentions for similar reasons. High-hope and optimistic individuals believe in their abilities to achieve positive outcomes despite role conflict, and therefore, should not perceive that their experiences of role conflict are enough justification to leave a job. Resilient individuals should not evidence a desire to leave their jobs because they are better able to overcome role conflict, and self-efficacious individuals are confident in their abilities to navigate past negativity generated by role conflict. Psychological capital captures and extends beyond all these beliefs and abilities; thus, I hypothesize:

*Hypothesis 4a: The effect of role conflict on an individual's turnover intentions depends on the level of psychological capital, such that the effect of role conflict on turnover intentions is weaker when psychological capital is high than when psychological capital is low.*

Additionally, the relationship between role conflict and job performance has been, at best, tenuous in the literature (e.g., Tubre & Collins, 2000). Psychological capital offers an explanation for why certain individuals, despite reporting high levels of role conflict, still perform well. These effects can be explained by each of the four dimensions. Hope is a measure of an individual's motivation to reach a goal, as well as his or her ability to identify multiple

pathways to that goal (Snyder, 2000); thus, high-hope individuals are able to recognize and bypass negative work-related events such as occasions of role conflict. Likewise, optimists believe they can generate positive outcomes by nature of their own power and control over their environments (Seligman, 1998), meaning that optimists too can limit the impact of role conflict on their goal attainment. By definition, resilient individuals rebound from negative events (Richardson, 2002), which can include role conflict. Finally, individuals high in self-efficacy are confident in their abilities to effectively manage potentially negative situations (Bandura, 1982), such as those that arise when during role conflict. Because psychological capital draws from each of these foundations but also demonstrates higher-order effects, I hypothesize:

*Hypothesis 4b: The effect of role conflict on job performance depends on the level of psychological capital, such that the effect of role conflict on job performance is weaker when psychological capital is high than when psychological capital is low.*

Figure 1 graphically represents these relationships.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter provided an overview of literature related to middle managers' experiences of role conflict and its detrimental effects on key performance outcomes. This review describes why middle managers can be expected to experience more role conflict than other groups within organizations, as well as a mechanism through which they can alleviate the negative effects of the competing expectations they are faced with in the execution of their jobs. This review of the literature has described many documented bivariate connections, but no literature yet addresses these constructs all together. Therefore, this study contributes by combining knowledge from three streams of literature to more holistically examine the experience of middle managers'

work. In the following chapter, I describe the methods used to test the relationships hypothesized above, the operationalizations of the study's focal and control variables, and the unique issues that arise during the study of individuals within their workplaces.

### **Chapter 3: Methods and Context**

This chapter presents the methodology used to conduct this study. First, I provide a general overview of the sample; second, I discuss the measures. The chapter concludes with an explanation of the data collection process as well as a description of the statistical analysis employed.

This study employs a survey-based, cross-sectional method to examine differences among middle managers' activity, role conflict, and psychological capital, as well as job performance and turnover intentions. The data were gathered from a survey delivered to middle managers in organizations across many industries. To test my hypotheses, I used multivariate regression to analyze the relationships among the constructs in the moderated-mediation models presented in Figure 1.

#### **Samples**

To capture information about the variables of interest across a wide variety of industries as well as organizations, three samples were used. Sample 1 is comprised of 14 alumni and currently-enrolled students in a Professional MBA program at a large university in the Southern United States. MBA students are a useful sample in a study of middle managers because often these students are actively working as middle managers in many different kinds of firms (e.g., Zhang, Tsui, Song, Li, & Jia, 2008). To ensure that respondents are middle managers, survey items were included to determine that respondents are not top management team members and are supervising employees who are also supervisors (e.g., Dutton & Ashford, 1993). Sample 2 consists of 62 middle managers drawn from a selection of organizations. Respondents were selected by members of the top management teams in each organization who had been instructed to identify middle managers on the basis of the definition provided above. When possible, I

compared the resulting lists of middle managers to organizational charts to ensure that respondents met the definition. This method of identifying appropriate respondents has been used in a wide variety of influential studies on middle managers (e.g., Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Currie & Procter, 2005; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1997). The third sample consists of 168 individuals recruited from the StudyResponse Project (Stanton & Weiss, 2002), a nonprofit academic service that matches individuals willing to participate in surveys with researchers seeking respondents. The sample was limited to middle managers by the StudyResponse Project, which gathers such information on potential respondents using a recruitment survey.

## **Measures**

Each of the measures employed in this study has been used in previous research. This section describes the development of each measure as well as any documented support for the measures' psychometric properties. The complete set of measures can be found in Appendix A. Cronbach's alphas for the scales used in this study can be found in Table 1.

### **Independent Variable – Middle Manager Activity**

Middle manager activity is assessed using the scale developed in Floyd and Wooldridge (1992b). The development of this scale started with a careful review of the qualitative work conducted in early middle manager studies (e.g., Bower, 1970; Burgelman, 1983a, b; Kanter, 1983). This review resulted in four categories of activities in which middle managers engage: championing alternatives, facilitating adaptability, synthesizing information, and implementing deliberate strategy, from which items were developed. These preliminary items were pretested on a small sample of practicing middle managers who offered feedback, resulting in a 16-item scale representing four factors (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992b). Respondents were asked to indicate on a 5-point Likert-type scale, on which 1 signifies "Never" and 5 "Frequently," how frequently they

perform the activities described in each item. Sample items include: “Propose programs of projects to higher level managers,” “Locate and provide resources for trial projects,” “Gather information on the feasibility of new programs,” and “Translate goals into action plans.” In this study, Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was .91.

### **Mediator Variable – Role Conflict**

This study measures role conflict using Rizzo et al.’s (1970) scale. Their scale development effort reduced 15 initial items to 6 items that were shown to be independent from other key dimensions. Following their foundational work, Rizzo et al.’s (1970) role conflict scale became the primary measurement for this construct (Jackson & Schuler, 1985; Tubre & Collins, 2000; Van Sell et al., 1981). Consequently, much scholarly attention has been paid to psychometric evaluation of this scale (e.g., Harris, 1991; House, Schuler, & Levanoni, 1983; McGee, Ferguson, & Seers, 1989; Schuler, Aldag, & Brief, 1977; Smith, Tisak, & Schmieder, 1993; Tracy & Johnson, 1981). The general conclusion across these tests is that the continued use of role conflict appears warranted (Van Sell et al., 1981). Sample items include “I work with two or more groups who operate quite differently” and “I receive incompatible requests from two or more people.” Respondents were asked to respond to each rate of these items on a five-point Likert-type scale on which 1 indicates “Strongly Disagree” and 7 indicates “Strongly Agree.” In this study, Cronbach’s alpha was .86.

### **Moderator Variable – Psychological Capital**

Psychological capital was measured using the Psychological Capital Questionnaire (Luthans et al., 2007a, b). To develop this instrument, Luthans and his colleagues identified extant scales for the four dimensions and selected the scales for each that demonstrated reliability and validity in its associated literature and relevance to the workplace. Additionally, each of the

selected scales measure state-like constructs so as to match the theoretical criteria for inclusion in the higher-order psychological capital. The selected scales are described below.

### *Hope*

Snyder and colleagues' (1991a) 12-item hope scale contained four items designed to measure agency for goals and four to measure pathways in thinking in regard to goals. Four items were included as distracters, which were later eliminated in the Psychological Capital Questionnaire. Subsequent tests using the hope scale reported satisfactory coefficient alphas between .79 and .95 (e.g., Snyder et al., 1996). Sample items include "There are lots of ways around any problem" and "I meet the goals that I set for myself."

### *Optimism*

The Psychological Capital Questionnaire measures optimism with six items from Scheier and Carver's (1985) Life Orientation Test. The final version of this test includes four positively-oriented items and four negatively-oriented items. Additionally, the Life Orientation Test includes four filler items to partially disguise the test's purpose (Scheier & Carver, 1985); these items were not included in the psychological capital scale (Luthans et al., 2007a). Sample items for the Life Orientation Test include "In uncertain times, I usually expect the best" and "I'm a believer in the idea that 'every cloud has a silver lining.'" Respondents were asked to indicate the level of their agreement for each item on a scale for which 0 represented "strongly disagree" and 4 indicated "strongly agree." In the scale development study, these eight items demonstrated adequate reliability ( $\alpha=.76$ ) (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Additionally, the Test-Retest reliability was .79, suggesting that the items remain relatively stable over the 4-week interval between tests. Scheier and Carver (1985) also concluded that the Life Orientation Test evidenced convergent validity after optimism correlated in the expected negative direction with

hopelessness, depression, perceived stress, alienation, and social; however, none of these correlations was higher than  $\pm .6$ , leading the authors to conclude that their optimism scale was discriminantly valid as well. Although Scheier and Carver (1985) designed their scale to measure dispositional optimism, and thus potentially violate the state-like inclusion criteria for psychological capital, a later test found this scale to be useful for measuring state-like optimism (Shifren & Hooker, 1995).

### ***Resilience***

Wagnild and Young's (1993) Resilience Scale was selected to measure resilience in the Psychological Capital Questionnaire. The 25-item scale was based on a qualitative study of older women who had successfully adapted after a major life event and a thorough review of the literature (Wagnild & Young, 1990). Sample items include "I can get through difficult times because I've experienced difficulty before" and "I feel that I can handle many things at a time." The original test used a 7-point Likert-type scale to assess the degree to which respondents agreed with each item; 1 represented "Strongly Disagree" and 7 indicated "Strongly Agree." The Resilience Scale demonstrated reliabilities between .73 and .91 on various samples across multiple successive studies (Wagnild, 2009). These studies also supported the construct, convergent, and discriminant validities established in Wagnild and Young's (1993) primary study.

### ***Self-Efficacy***

Luthans et al., (2007a) selected Chen, Gully, and Eden's (2001) generalized self-efficacy scale. Based on previous studies of generalized self-efficacy (e.g., Eden, 1988, 2001), Chen and colleagues developed eight items, measured on a scale anchored by 1, "Strongly Disagree, and 5, "Strongly Agree," and reported Cronbach's alphas ranging from .85 to .95 across multiple

samples. Results from the three studies used for scale development (Chen et al., 2001) indicate strong convergent and predictive validity. Items in this scale include “I will be able to successfully overcome many challenges” and “I am confident that I can perform effectively on many different tasks.”

### ***The Psychological Capital Questionnaire***

As can be seen in these summaries, each of these scales received thorough psychometric evaluation before being considered for inclusion in the Psychological Capital Questionnaire. Additionally, each was selected because it had demonstrated transitory properties and had been used in studies of workplaces (Luthans et al., 2007a). To ensure equal weighting of each of the four dimensions, the psychological capital scale includes the six items from each of the four instruments that loaded the highest in confirmatory factor analysis tests (Luthans et al., 2007a). To capture state-like data, the survey instructions requested that respondents consider the degree to which they agreed with each item at that moment. Studies incorporating this measure have reported strong internal reliabilities from .88 (Luthans et al., 2007a) to .92 (Avey, Luthans, & Jensen, 2009). Further discriminant, convergent, and criterion validities were established (Luthans et al., 2007a) by showing that psychological capital demonstrates unique sources of variance from a variety of demographically- and theoretically-related variables including age, education, agreeableness, and openness. The authors concluded that psychological capital predicts variance beyond each of these variables as well as expected similarity and distinctiveness, indicating strong construct, convergent, and discriminant validity, respectively. In this study, respondents were asked to indicate their agreement with each item on a five-point scale anchored by “Strongly Disagree” at 1 and “Strongly Agree” at 5. Cronbach’s alpha for the psychological capital scale was .86.

## **Dependent Variables**

To capture multiple effects of the relationships among managerial activity, role conflict, and psychological capital, two dependent variables were chosen for this study: job performance and turnover intentions. Additionally, to address the uniqueness of each sample, job performance was measured as both self-rated performance and manager-rated performance. Turnover intentions were captured with the same scale across both samples.

### ***Job Performance***

To ensure consistency in performance measurements across organizations, data on job performance were gathered through the in-role behavior subscale from Williams and Anderson (1991). This scale appends three new items drawn from a thorough literature review to O'Reilly and Chatman's (1986) 3-item in-role performance scale. The new 6-item scale demonstrated a strong level of internal reliability ( $\alpha=.91$ ), which is similar to those found in later studies where Cronbach's alphas ranged from .93 to .94 (Sparrowe, Liden, Wayne, & Kraimer, 2001; Turnley, Bolino, Lester, & Bloodgood, 2003). This measure of performance is of particular interest in the present study because it addresses the adequacy with which middle managers perform their roles. Respondents were asked to indicate on a scale from 1, "Strongly Disagree," to 5, "Strongly Agree," the extent to which middle managers satisfactorily engaged in prescribed in-role behaviors including "performs tasks that are expected of him/her" and "fulfills responsibilities specified in job description."

### ***Turnover Intentions***

An individual's intent to leave his or her job was assessed with the Intention to Turnover scale from the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire (Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins, & Klesh, 1983). This scale asks respondents to indicate the extent to which they agree

with three items on a 5-point scale anchored by 1, “Strongly Disagree,” and 5, “Strongly Agree.” The items are: “I will actively look for a new job in the next year,” I often think about quitting,” and “I will probably look for a new job in the next year.” Subsequent studies using this measure have indicated satisfactory internal reliability with Cronbach’s alphas ranging from .76 to .92 (Ali & Baloch, 2009; Harris, Kacmar, & Witt, 2005; Khatri, Fern, & Budhwar, 2001). In this study, Cronbach’s alpha for turnover intentions was .91.

### **Control Variables**

To ensure that the performance effects captured in this study resulted from the variables of interest, several control variables were included. Previous empirical work has shown that a number of demographic variables can have an impact on turnover intentions, including age, organizational and position tenure, and gender (Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000; Hom & Griffeth, 1995; Kacmar & Ferris, 1989). Including these variables also controls for any possibility that performance was evaluated differently on the basis of employee’s gender (Turnley et al., 2003) or other demographic attributes.

### **Procedure**

In Sample 1, surveys were distributed to past and present participants of a Professional MBA program at a large Southeastern university. Each student completed a web-based survey designed in Qualtrics and distributed by email, at the end of which they voluntarily provided an email address for their immediate supervisor. A subsequent confidential survey was distributed to this supervisor.

The organizations represented in Sample 2 were selected on the basis of their hierarchies; each had a vertical design that ensured the identification of middle managers in their organizational hierarchy. I contacted upper-level executives at the organizations, who then

agreed to participate and to allow me access to respondents. These executives identified middle managers from organizational charts and also provided performance ratings of the middle managers who reported to them. Respondents at both levels completed the web-based surveys; middle managers provided information on their activity, role conflict, psychological capital, turnover intentions, and job performance, while the executives' survey measured middle managers' job performance.

Sample 3 respondents volunteered to participate in surveys distributed by the StudyResponse Project and provided demographic and job-related data in a recruitment survey. From their database of potential respondents, the StudyResponse staff generated a list of middle managers appropriate for this project and then sent out an email containing an online survey link. Respondents were incentivized with a \$5 Amazon gift certificate for participation.

Data from the three samples were combined to run analyses. After combination, the sample size for the turnover intentions and self-assessed job performance models was  $n=244$ , and the sample size for the managerially-assessed job performance model was  $n=64$ . These data were analyzed using multivariate regression. Further, the model presented in Figure 1 was tested using Edwards and Lambert's (2007) path analytic framework for integrating moderation and mediation and Hayes's (2012) PROCESS macro for SPSS 21. Moderated mediation refers to models in which mediated effects vary with respect to levels of moderator variables; mediated moderation refers more specifically to models in which the independent variable and the moderator interact to impact a mediator that, in turn, impacts a dependent variable (Edwards & Lambert, 2007). The confusion related to terminology in this case results from the partial overlap between the two, which have been referred to as "two sides of a coin" (Muller, Judd, & Yzerbyt, 2005: 862). In this study, the moderator, psychological capital, moderates the relationship

between the mediator, role conflict, and the dependent variables, turnover intentions and job performance; therefore, the models tested here are moderated mediation models. The path analytic framework is uniquely capable of estimating moderated mediation models because it allows researchers to evaluate moderated path models and therefore avoid the debate between the forms entirely. Additionally, this method provides estimates of the mediator's indirect effect and captures information about how this effect varies across different levels of the moderating variable (Edwards & Lambert, 2007).

Prior to analysis, all study variables were analyzed to determine normality using both graphical and numerical methods. Although some variables indicated non-normality across scatterplot graphs, histograms, and Shapiro-Wilk (Shapiro & Wilk, 1965) and skewness and kurtosis tests, the shape of their distributions closely echoed previous literature related to turnover intentions and job performance. Further, non-normal distributions do not lead to bias in estimating regression coefficients and the interpretation of significance tests and confidence intervals in large samples is not affected by non-normality (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003). Thus, no cases were removed because of their distributions. Please see Table 1 for descriptions of the distributions for each variable.

Across the study, most variables—including role conflict, turnover intentions, self- and managerially- reported job performance, and organizational tenure—were missing information in less than 5% of cases. Listwise deletion of four cases resulted from missing data related to these variables, bringing the final sample size for turnover intentions and self-assessed job performance models to  $n=240$  and the final sample size for the managerially-assessed job performance model to  $n=62$ . To avoid any selection bias or decreased statistical power caused by listwise deletion of cases with missing data (Roth, 1994), missing values were generated using

sequential regression multivariate imputation, or imputation using chained equations (ICE) (Royston, 2004) for two study variables, psychological capital and middle manager activity, that were missing data in 5 to 15% of cases (Allison, 2001). Multiple imputation provides estimates of sampling variance due to imputation and captures changes in the results across multiple, different data sets (Judd & Kenny, 2010). ICE further allows researchers to impute variables with a regression model that depends on other variables and cycles through the variables with missing data (He, Zaslavsky, Landrum, Harrington, & Catalano, 2010; van Buuren, Brand, Groothuis-Oudshoorn, & Rubin, 2006).

Only one control variable, age, was not imputed because the data were missing primarily from Sample 2; thus, data were not missing at random and any conclusions drawn from models that included age were suspect (Little & Rubin, 1987). Consequently, age was excluded from further analyses. Additionally, position tenure was found to have no significant correlation to any of the focal study variables, including the key dependent variables; therefore, position tenure was excluded from further analyses to prevent an unnecessary control variable from reducing statistical power or yielding biased estimates (Becker, 2005). Finally, to provide meaningful coefficients in regression equations, all continuous measures were mean-centered before any analyses were run (Aiken & West, 1991; Cole, Bruch, & Walter, 2008; Edwards & Lambert, 2007).

This chapter has provided an overview of the samples, measures, and procedures used in the present study to test the hypothesized relationships between the variables of interest. The methods used in this study add to understanding of the measurement of moderated mediation models, and thus offer contributions to a growing body of studies that use the path analytic framework. By examining variation in the effects of middle managers' role conflict on two

outcome variables at different levels of psychological capital, this study contributes to the middle management perspective (Wooldridge et al., 2008), role theory (Kahn et al., 1964), and positive organizational behavior (Luthans, 2002a). The next chapter presents the results of the two studies.

## **Chapter 4: Results**

Table 1 presents the uncentered means and standard deviations for each of study variables as well as the correlations between them.

### **Descriptive Statistics**

A little over half, or 65.5%, or 160, of the 244 respondents to this survey are male. The 204 respondents who provided data on their age are 40.7 years old on average. They have been with their companies for an average of 11.82 years, with responses ranging from 3 months to 39 years, and in their positions for an average of 6 years with a range of 3 months to 23 years. Most of the respondents, or 102 of 244 (42%), have college degrees; 73 of 244 (30%) hold MBAs; 24 of 244 (10%) have Associate's degrees; 20 of 244 (8%) have high school degrees or GEDs; 18 of 244 (7%) have a Ph. D., and 7 respondents either have no degree or a certification specific to their industries. Additionally, respondents reported a wide range of activity level, from 17, which indicates that respondents answered that they "never" engage in most of the 16 middle manager activity items, to 80, which means that respondents answered that they "very frequently" engage in all of the middle manager activity items (scale anchors: 1 = "never" and 5 = "very frequently").

### **Hypothesis Testing**

Hypotheses were tested using PROCESS (Hayes, 2012) to capture direct, indirect, and total effects of the moderated-mediation models used in this study (Edwards & Lambert, 2007). The statistical approaches proposed by Edwards and Lambert (2007) and Preacher and Hayes (2004) offer benefits over the traditional Baron and Kenny (1986) mediation tests in that they provide more power by incorporating the Sobel (1982) test of indirect effects. To overcome limitations of the Sobel test, namely its base assumption of linearity, which the non-normal

product term for the moderator renders invalid, the PROCESS macro also reports bootstrapped confidence intervals as recommended to avoid issues with statistical power (MacKinnon, Lockwood, & Williams, 2004).

Finally, PROCESS includes a third interlinked stage to incorporate the proposed moderator into the mediated model tested in the first two stages. This stage investigates the possibility that the indirect effects are contingent on levels of the moderator (Edwards & Lambert, 2007) and uses bootstrapping to provide confidence intervals and to explore the significance of conditional indirect effects (Preacher, Rucker, & Hayes, 2007) at changing values of the moderator (Hayes, 2012).

Results of each stage are reported by dependent variable in the next section. All regression coefficients presented below are unstandardized.

### **Turnover Intentions**

The hypotheses related to turnover intentions predict that middle manager activity (the IV) will have an indirect effect on turnover intentions (the DV). The relationship between role conflict (the mediator) and turnover intentions (the DV) is dependent on each respondent's reported level of psychological capital (the moderator). Figure 2 depicts this model and the effects reported below for both turnover intentions and self-assessed job performance. Controls variables in this model include gender and organizational tenure. Table 2 presents the results of regression, Sobel, and bootstrapping tests for Model 1.

In support of Hypothesis 1, which predicts that the level of a middle manager's activity will be positively related to his or her role conflict, middle manager activity was positively related to role conflict ( $b = .23, t = 6.34, p < .001$ ). Likewise, a positive relationship was found between role conflict and turnover intentions, while controlling for middle manager activity ( $b =$

.31,  $t = 8.64$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Further, tests of the indirect effect of role conflict are significant (Sobel  $z = 5.31$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and the bias-corrected 95% confidence interval did not contain zero (.04 to .11), supporting Hypothesis 2a, which posits that role conflict mediates the relationship between middle manager activity and turnover intentions. Hypothesis 3a, which asserts that psychological capital is negatively related to turnover intentions, was also supported ( $b = -.05$ ,  $t = -2.47$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

Hypothesis 4a claims that the relationship between role conflict and turnover intentions will change at different levels of psychological capital. The results of tests of this hypothesis are not significant ( $b = -.003$ ,  $t = -.82$ ,  $p < .41$ ); thus, Hypothesis 4a is not supported in a sample of the size given here. Table 3 displays the full results.

### **Self-Assessed Job Performance**

The hypotheses related to job performance predict that middle manager activity (the IV) will have an indirect effect on job performance (the DV), measured as self-reported performance, and that the relationship between role conflict (the mediator) and self-report job performance (the DV) will change at different levels of psychological capital (the moderator). Figure 2 displays these relationships for both turnover intentions and self-assessed job performance. Table 4 presents the results of regression, Sobel, and bootstrapping tests for these hypotheses.

Because the sample size and variables included in Hypothesis 1 remain the same between the turnover intentions model and this model, Hypothesis 1 was supported ( $b = .23$ ,  $t = 6.34$ ,  $p < .001$ ). A negative relationship was found between role conflict and self-assessed job performance ( $b = -.17$ ,  $t = -4.31$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The Sobel  $z$  test also supports an indirect effect (Sobel  $z = -4.23$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and the bootstrapped confidence intervals did not contain zero (-.0919 to -.0347); thus Hypothesis 2b, which asserts that role conflict mediates the relationship between middle

manager activity and self-assessed job performance, is supported. The results of tests for Hypothesis 3b, which claims that psychological capital is positively related to self-assessed job performance, are positive and significant ( $b = .24, t = 11.22, p < .001$ ); thus Hypothesis 3b is supported.

In addition, Hypothesis 4b, which predicts that psychological capital moderates the relationship between role conflict and job performance, was supported ( $b = .01, t = 2.41, p < .05$ ). Figure 3 depicts the simple slopes that form this interaction at one standard deviation above and below the psychological capital mean.

Further, Table 5 summarizes the degree of conditional indirect effect and their confidence intervals for individuals with different levels of psychological capital. These findings indicate that the indirect effect of middle manager activity through role conflict strengthens as psychological capital increases. The confidence interval that contains zero at the +1 standard deviation of psychological capital indicates that role conflict may have no effect on job performance at higher levels of psychological capital.

### **Managerially-Assessed Performance**

In regards to managerially-assessed performance, hypotheses predict that middle manager activity (the IV) will have an indirect effect on job performance (the DV), measured as manager's ratings of performance, and that the relationship between role conflict (the mediator) and managerially-assessed job performance (the DV) will change at different levels of psychological capital (the moderator). These relationships are shown in Figure 4. Table 6 presents the results of regression, Sobel, and bootstrapping tests for these hypotheses.

Because the sample size for this model was reduced to  $n=62$ , which required PROCESS to run a separate model, Hypothesis 1 was not supported ( $b = .06, t = .75, p = .46$ ). In addition,

the relationship between role conflict and managerially-assessed job performance was non-significant ( $b = .06, t = .71, p = .48$ ). The Sobel test supported these findings ( $z = .39, p = .7$ ) and the confidence intervals contained zero ( $-.003$  to  $.04$ ); thus Hypothesis 2b was not supported. Hypothesis 3b suggests a positive relationship between psychological capital and job performance; this relationship was non-significant as well ( $b = -.01, t = -.26, p = .8$ ). The moderated relationship suggested in Hypothesis 4b was also non-significant ( $b = .001, t = .06, p = .95$ ). Although the small sample reported here lacks the statistical power to confirm significant relationships between study variables, the marginal significance for two coefficients deserve note. First, when controlling for role conflict and psychological capital, every one unit change in an individual's reported level of middle manager activity results in a  $-0.11$  unit change in managerially-assessed job performance ( $b = -.11, t = -1.9, p = .06$ ). Second, every additional year that a middle manager has been employed by the organization results in a  $.08$  unit change in the ratings from their managers ( $b = .08, t = 1.78, p = .08$ ). Table 7 reports the regression results for the managerially-assessed job performance model.

Table 8 shows a summary of the hypotheses and whether each was supported. The next chapter discusses the theoretical and practical implications of these findings as well as the boundary conditions of this study and the future research opportunities implied by these boundaries.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion**

This study explores individual-level effects of middle managers' experience of their work and documents the impact of those effects on key outcomes. In addition, this study provides a glimpse of the personal strengths that offset negative outcomes and examines these factors through a role theory lens, adding a new perspective on the impact of middle managers' roles. The connections found in this study offer several contributions.

To start, the models investigated here extend extant theory related to the role conflict that occurs when individuals try to reconcile incompatible demands. Although extant tests of this theory have failed to support negative, theoretically indicated connections between role conflict and job performance (Fisher & Gitelson, 1983; Jackson & Schuler, 1985; Örtqvist & Wincent, 2006; Tubre & Collins, 2000), this project offers an explanation by finding that individuals draw on personal strengths to perform well despite experiencing role conflict in their work.

Additionally, the findings presented here substantiate a link between middle manager activity and role conflict. By doing so, I extend previous theory that suggests that middle managers' position between top and front-line managers implies detrimental effects caused by contradictory expectations (Floyd & Lane, 2000). This project provides evidence that, more than just the position between two organizational groups, the strategic activities middle managers engage in are related to their role conflict.

Furthermore, I broaden the body of literature related to role theory by investigating contextual and personal factors that impact the role episode (Kahn et al., 1964). Although many researchers (e.g., Ammeter, Douglas, Ferris, & Goka, 2004; Bauer & Simmons, 2000; Biddle, 1986; Gong, Shenkar, Luo, & Nyaw, 2001; Hamner & Tosi, 1974) have acknowledged and documented organizational, personal, and interpersonal factors that impact the role episode, few

have explored the positive factors at play. By exploring individuals' psychological capital in the role episode, my findings encourage further investigation of the overlap between the positive organizational lens and role theory.

Finally, POB scholars have documented many empirical links between an individual's psychological capital and organizationally important outcomes (e.g., Luthans et al., 2005, 2007a, 2008, 2010; Rego et al., 2010). By tying psychological capital through into role theory, I provide empirical support for previous findings as well as theoretical explanations for those connections.

In the next section, I address the theoretical implications of each of these contributions. I explore the practical implications of my findings in the following section. The final portion of this chapter focuses on the possibilities for future research offered by the boundary conditions of this study.

## **Theoretical Implications**

The quantitative results of this study offer insights into the factors that affect key organizational outcomes including turnover intentions and self-assessed and managerially-assessed job performance. Each of the models used to generate these insights have several implications for theory.

First, the connection between middle manager activity and role conflict verifies propositions from previous literature and extends beyond this proposition by exploring the activities that are related to role conflict. Floyd and Lane (2000) posit that middle managers experience role conflict during periods of strategic renewal because of their position in the organization and acknowledge key managerial activities at each level that facilitate renewal. Specifically, they suggest that middle managers will experience more role conflict than top or front-line managers because of the expectations sent to middle managers from each group. By

finding that middle manager activity is positively related to role conflict, I extend their proposition. My findings suggest that the content of middle managers' work, not just their organizational position, affects their perceptions of the level of incompatibility in the expectations they seek to meet. In other words, as middle managers pursue more activity, they experience more role conflict. This further speaks to a rift in the middle manager perspective in how researchers define middle managers (Wooldridge et al., 2008). Although Dutton and Ashford's (1993: 398) clarity is helpful for middle manager studies that can easily distinguish participants as "supervisors who supervise supervisors," the variance found in this study suggest that collapsing participants by position in the organizational hierarchy removes interesting variance. Instead, using a comprehensive definition (i.e., Beck & Plowman, 2009; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992b) allows an examination of the activities that are connected to role conflict and suggests that middle managers differ widely in the strategic activities they pursue.

Further, this study builds on a stream of research that connects middle manager activity to organizational performance. Findings from these studies indicate the importance of middle managers to financial performance (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1997; Mair, 2005; Wooldridge & Floyd, 1990). Although these studies show that middle manager activity is organizationally beneficial, my findings indicate that increasing levels of activity can be detrimental to the individual middle managers. Thus, this study has implications for the middle management perspective and the ways in which researchers conceptualize this organizational group.

The next sections examine the impacts of middle manager activity and role conflict on each of the study's dependent variables. Likewise, implications of the findings related to psychological capital are discussed below in terms of its direct and indirect effects on each outcome.

## **Turnover Intentions**

This study verified findings from previous literature that role conflict is positively related to turnover intentions (Brief & Aldag, 1976; Lyons, 1971; Johnson & Graen, 1973). This link supports explanations from theorists who posit that role conflict generates uncomfortable working conditions that individuals are likely to leave when they experience role conflict at high levels or over extended periods of time (Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Babin & Boles, 1998).

Further, this model supported the negative relationship between psychological capital and turnover intentions. POB scholars suggest that psychological capital lessens an individual's intent to leave their job because psychological capital represents an individual's stock of positive-oriented strengths (Luthans et al., 2007a). These strengths enable an individual to make a positive appraisal of their ability to achieve goals, which lowers the chances that they would want to leave their jobs (Luthans et al., 2007b). In fact, each of the underlying constructs—hope, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy—speaks to an individual's confidence and ability to overcome circumstances and attain success. Given the intuitive nature of the connection between psychological capital and turnover intentions, findings that add support to this relationship (Avey et al., 2009; Luthans & Jensen, 2005) are unsurprising.

In contrast, one of the more unexpected implications of this study is that psychological capital does not moderate the relationship between role conflict and turnover intentions. Although an individual's stock of personal strengths does lower their intent to leave their jobs, it does not change their intentions to leave if they are experience role conflict. This implies that no level of psychological capital prevents individuals from intending to leave a situation in which they experience lots of role conflict. This nuance is new to POB, which has linked psychological capital to a variety of individually beneficial outcomes that, by extension, benefit the

organization (Luthans et al., 2006). In fact, this previous POB study advocates the use of organizational micro-interventions designed to increase employees' psychological capital. In contrast, the findings from this study suggest that increasing employees' psychological capital without also decreasing the drivers of role conflict, such as middle manager activity, will have no effect on their intentions to leave. This has implications for the POB literature as well the middle manager perspective.

### **Self-Assessed Job Performance**

In sum, this study found support for all the hypotheses related to self-assessed job performance. This model shows that the more strategic activity middle managers engage in, the more role conflict they experience and the more likely they are to report lower perceptions of their performance, except when those middle managers have higher levels of psychological capital. The direct link between role conflict and job performance is intuitive and has been suggested and found in many POB studies (Luthans et al., 2005, 2010; Norman et al., 2010; Rego et al., 2010). This study confirms that literature's conclusion that high psychological-capital individuals, who are confident in their abilities to succeed, perceive that they perform well.

The novel implication of this model is that psychological capital counteracts the negative performance impacts of role conflict. This finding connects psychological capital to a larger body of literature related to workplace stress, in which scholars explore the theoretical links between work attitudes, stress, and a variety of individual- and organization-level outcomes (e.g., Coomber & Barriball, 2007; Luthans & Jensen, 2005; Saks & Ashforth, 1997). Psychological capital speaks to this literature by offering a mechanism through which individuals can abate negative consequences of workplace stress. Further, this finding directly answers the call for

investigation into the mechanisms that moderate the role conflict to job performance relationship (Tubre & Collins, 2000). Previous literature has been stymied by weak and non-significant findings in tests of this literature despite the plethora of theoretical evidence that indicates a negative impact of role conflict on job performance. This study shows that individuals can draw on their personal strengths to prevent the experience of role conflict from negatively impacting their job performance and thus has implications of note for theory and practice.

### **Managerially-Assessed Job Performance**

Although none of the hypotheses related to managerially-assessed job performance were supported, this model still offers some implications for theory. Specifically, two of the study variables showed a moderately significant relationship to managerial assessments of job performance, although the findings should be interpreted with caution. The first, organizational tenure, was intended as a control variable in this study, but evidenced a moderately significant positive relationship ( $b=.08$ ,  $p=.08$ ). This finding parallels previous literature that has included employee tenure as a predictor of job performance. One meta-analysis of 115 studies that included both employee tenure and job performance supported a non-linear relationship between the two that changed depending on the complexity of the job (Wright & Bonett, 2002). Although this model lacks the statistical power necessary to explore the U-shaped relationship found in their study, it does provide some support to indicate that managers tend to attribute higher performance ratings to those employees they have known longer.

The second study variable that was related to managerially-assessed job performance was middle manager activity, but only after controlling for role conflict and psychological capital. The negative and marginally significant relationship ( $b= -.11$  ;  $p=.06$ ) suggests that middle managers who engage in more activity have lower performance ratings from their supervisors

than do their less involved counterparts. In fact, this parallels findings related to job specialization and scope. This literature suggests that reducing the scope of work has a positive effect on employee outcomes such as job satisfaction (Stone, 1975, 1976) and work attitudes (Shepard, 1969). The logic suggests that individuals who are able to more closely focus their attention are more satisfied with their work (Porter & Lawler, 1965). Although this study cannot conclusively offer evidence to expand this literature, the findings in this model suggest some evidence that higher levels of middle manager activity are associated with lower managerially-assessed performance ratings.

In sum, the findings of this study have generated novel implications for theory. To start, the level of middle manager activity varies across middle managers, meaning that some middle managers report almost no activity while others report high levels of activity. The range of this variable suggests that studies that use a purely hierarchical definition to define their sample may be missing important differences in their respondents. Additionally, psychological capital was not found to affect the relationship between role conflict and turnover intentions. Although previous studies have focused on mutually important individual- and organization-level benefits of employees with high levels of psychological capital, this finding suggests that the benefits of psychological capital to the individual may diverge from the benefits reaped by the organization. In contrast, psychological capital did offset the impact of role conflict on job performance, which lends new insight to scholars hoping to explain why the experience of role conflict seems to be unrelated to job performance (Tubre & Collins, 2000). Although the findings related to effects on managerially-assessed job performance require more exploration to ensure validity, this study offers some insight into the drivers of manager's perceptions of employee job performance.

These results are further explored in the following section, which describes their practical implications for managers and organizations.

## **Practical Implications**

Knowledge gleaned from this study offers several opportunities for organizations that want to encourage their middle managers to experience their work more positively. First, this study has shown that middle managers engage in different amounts of strategic activity. Given that this study has also shown that higher levels of strategic activity are related to higher levels of role conflict, organizations interested in reducing role-related stress for their middle managers may want to examine the content of the work they assign to middle managers. Additionally, because role conflict represents the extent to which focal individuals believe that they are expected to reconcile impossible requests from different groups, efforts to generate consensus about middle managers' roles are likely to reduce role conflict. Implementing strategic consensus necessitates open and regular communication among managers at different levels of the firm (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992a) and direct engagement in strategic activities (Westley, 1990; Wooldridge & Floyd, 1990).

Second, the findings of this study indicate that role conflict is related to detrimental personal outcomes for those who experience it, which supports findings from previous literature. Unfortunately for the middle managers who experience higher levels of role conflict as a result of increasing levels of middle manager activity, this activity is organizationally beneficial (Huy, 2002; King, Fowler, & Zeithaml, 2001; Mair, 2005; Wooldridge & Floyd, 1990) and can even be vital (Boyett & Currie, 2004). However, the role conflict related to it can be connected to detrimental outcomes for the organization, such as increased turnover and lowered job performance. To abate the organizational impact of role conflict, organizations should look for

ways to encourage personal strengths, such as psychological capital, that could help individuals to offset the experience of role conflict.

Third, this study suggests some utility for middle managers to develop psychological capital. The stocks of personal strengths represented by psychological capital relate to lower turnover intentions and higher self-perceptions of performance. Additionally, psychological capital may help middle managers to offset role conflict related to their positions. Micro-interventions have been shown to increase levels of psychological capital and increase return on investment for organizations that employ them (Luthans et al., 2006), indicating that psychological capital is a benefit for individuals and organizations. The results of this study generally support that finding, with one small caveat. As it concerns individuals' turnover intentions, psychological capital appears to have little effect for middle managers experiencing role conflict; thus, organizations may not limit their middle managers' turnover intentions by developing their psychological capital alone. Just the same, psychological capital does help to mitigate the impact of role conflict on job performance and therefore may offer benefits to middle managers and their organizations.

### **Boundary Conditions and Future Directions**

Any study design used to address research questions is necessarily limited (Creswell, 2009); however, the boundary conditions imposed by the design of this study offer many opportunities for future researchers. First, this study has considered the level of middle manager activity rather than the type. Doing so allows an examination of the reported effects of a wide range of middle manager activity, but looking at each activity—championing, facilitating, implementing, and synthesizing—separately may reveal more nuance about middle managers' experience of their work. Floyd and Wooldridge (1992b, 1997) explore several outcomes of

these activities at the organizational level, meaning that future research is needed to offer insight into the individual-level impact of each activity. For instance, by examining middle managers engaged in different levels of each activity, researchers may find that championing has more of an impact on middle managers' turnover intentions than does implementing. If so, these researchers may be able to tease out the impact of issue selling (Dutton & Ashford, 1993) on the individual middle manager, and thus contribute to our understanding of what activities encourages middle managers to engage in, or depart from, their organizations. Further, understanding the levels of activity engaged in by groups of middle managers may allow future researchers to develop a typology of middle managers that allows comparison across organizations.

Second, this study has purposefully focused on middle managers; however, this boundary condition suggests possible future research opportunities. Floyd and Lane (2000) suggested that middle managers are distinct from top and front-line managers in that they occupy middle positions that generate role conflict. This study has found a relationship between middle manager activity and role conflict, which suggests that future researchers may find differences in the levels or even direction of these relationships for top and front-line managers. Observing and comparing levels of role conflict for managers across the organization would offer many contributions to the management literature.

Third, this study has examined the impacts of middle manager activity, role conflict, and psychological capital on a variety of individual-level outcomes. Connecting these factors to organizational-level outcomes could speak to a promising stream of research related to the micro-foundations of strategy, which aim to uncover the individual-level actions and interactions that impact organizational strategy and performance (Abell, Felin, & Foss, 2008; Foss, 2011;

Gavetti, 2005; Teece, 2007). Connecting the middle manager perspective (Wooldridge et al., 2008) and the micro-foundations literature could offer new insight into the organizational importance of middle managers and their activities.

Fourth, the non-significant findings related to the effect of psychological capital on the relationship between role conflict and turnover intentions suggests that other moderators may prove interesting in further examinations. Future researchers may find that lateral connections between middle managers at the same hierarchical level also help to offset role conflict and lower turnover intentions. Middle managers may be able to draw support from colleagues within the same organization who have dealt with similar problems, and qualitative exploration could help to tease out the mechanisms through which middle managers support each other.

Finally, this study uses a cross-sectional design, which limits claims of causality. Longitudinal research could more definitively determine the direction of the relationships explored here; for instance, data gathered over time might support a reciprocal relationship between middle manager activity and role conflict, which would indicate that middle managers reduce their activity levels in response to role conflict. Qualitative research could examine this process as well, offering insight into how middle managers use their psychological capital to reduce the negative outcomes of role-based stressors like conflict. Additionally, psychological capital's state-based nature suggests that longitudinal manipulations may show that middle managers can increase their psychological capital to offset negative outcomes of role conflict.

In sum, this study has offered a variety of novel insights into middle managers' experience of their work. Despite the theoretical and practical implications offered by this study, the boundary conditions imposed here offer future researchers a variety of avenues to expand

these avenues and continue creating new knowledge related to middle managers and their workplaces.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusion**

Previous middle manager research has provided valuable insight into the influence middle managers can have on their organizations (Boyett & Currie, 2004; Huy, 2002; Wooldridge & Floyd, 1990); however, this literature has focused primarily on organization-level outcomes without considering the impact that middle managers' work may have on them personally. The examination offered in this study fills that gap by connecting middle manager activities to individually-relevant outcomes while also suggesting a new mechanism by which middle managers mitigate the personally damaging effects of their work activities. Furthermore, this study unites an established theory base with well-developed and documented phenomena from disparate streams of research. Therefore, this study introduces a fruitful new stream of research for organizational scholars.

In addition to the benefits to researchers, this study offers value to practicing managers and organizations. The upward and downward influence that middle managers exert can be vital in their organizations (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992b, 1997). Unfortunately for those middle managers, the linchpin position they occupy in their organizations is related to damaging role conflict and negative personal outcomes. Uncovering more about these outcomes and the mechanisms middle managers use to offset them offers practicing managers and researchers alike advances new understanding about middle managers and the workplace expectations that drive them. This study begins to tease out these relationships and, in so doing, reveals unexpected findings and non-findings related to the impact of middle managers' activity and roles. These mixed results suggest that the roles middle managers play in their organizations have a strong impact on them. Given the impact they have on their organizations, the results of this study highlight an opportunity for research to have a positive impact on individuals and organizations.

## **List of References**

- Abell, P., Felin, T., & Foss, N. 2008. Building micro-foundations for the routines, capabilities, and performance links. *Managerial and Decision Economics*, 29: 489-502.
- Adams, V. H., Snyder, C., Rand, K. L., King, E. A., Sigmon, D. R., & Pulvers, K. M. 2003. Hope in the workplace. In R. A. Giacalone, & C. L. Jurkiewicz (Eds.), *Handbook of workplace spirituality and organizational performance*: 367-377. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.
- Aiken, L. S., & West, S. G. 1991. *Multiple regression: Testing and interpreting interactions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Aldag, R. J., & Brief, A. P. 1978. Supervisory style and police role stress. *Journal of Police Science and Administration*, 6: 362-367.
- Ali, N., & Baloch, Q. B. 2009. Predictors of organizational commitment and turnover intention of medical representatives: An empirical evidence of Pakistani companies. *Journal of Managerial Sciences*, 3(2): 263-273.
- Allen, V. L., & van de Vliert, E. 1984. *Role transitions: Explorations and explanations*. New York: Plenum.
- Allison, P. D. 2001. *Missing data*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Allison, P. J., Guichard, C., & Gilain, L. 2000. A prospective investigation of dispositional optimism as a predictor of health-related quality of life in head and neck cancer patients. *Quality of Life Research*, 9(8): 951-960.
- Ammeter, A. P., Douglas, C., Ferris, G. R., & Goka, H. 2004. A social relationship conceptualization of trust and accountability in organizations. *Human Resource Management Review*, 14: 47-65.

- Ansari, M. A., & Kapoor, A. 1987. Organizational context and upward influence tactics. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 40(1): 39-49.
- Ashford, S. J., Rothbard, N. P., Piderit, S. K., & Dutton, J. E. 1998. Out on a limb: The role of context and impression management in selling gender-equity issues. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 43(1): 23-57.
- Ashforth, B. E., & Saks, A. M. 1996. Socialization tactics: Longitudinal effects on newcomer adjustment. *Academy of Management Journal*, 39(1): 149-178.
- Avey, J. B., Luthans, F., & Jensen, S. M. 2009. Psychological capital: A positive resource for combating employee stress and turnover. *Human Resource Management*, 48(5): 677-693.
- Avey, J. B., Patera, J. L., & West, B. J. 2006. The implications of positive psychological capital on employee absenteeism. *Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies*, 13(2): 42-60.
- Babin, B. J., & Boles, J. S. 1998. Employee behavior in a service environment: A model and test of potential differences between men and women. *Journal of Marketing*, 62: 77-91.
- Bagozzi, R. P. 1978. Salesforce performance and satisfaction as a function of individual difference, interpersonal, and situational factors. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 15: 517-531.
- Baird, L. L. 1969. A study of the role relations of graduate students. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 60: 15-21.
- Balogun, J., & Johnson, G. 2004. Organizational restructuring and middle manager sensemaking. *Academy of Management Journal*, 47(4): 523-549.

- Bandura, A. 1982. Self-efficacy mechanism in human agency. *American Psychologist*, 37(2): 122-147.
- Bannister, B., & Griffeth, R. 1986. Applying a causal analytic framework to the Mobley, Horner, and Hollingsworth (1978) turnover model: A useful reexamination. *Journal of Management*, 12(3): 433-443.
- Banton, M. 1965. *Roles: An introduction to the study of social relations*. New York: Basic Books, Inc.
- Barnum, D. D., Snyder, C., Rapoff, M. A., Mani, M. M., & Thompson, R. 1998. Hope and social support in psychological adjustment of children who have survived burn injuries and their matched controls. *Children's Health Care*, 27(1): 15-30.
- Baron, R. M., & Kenny, D. A. 1986. The moderator-mediator variable distinction in social psychological research: Conceptual, strategic, and statistical considerations. . *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 51: 1173-1182.
- Bates, F. L., & Harvey, C. C. 1975. *The structure of social systems*. New York: Wiley.
- Bauer, J. C., & Simmons, P. 2000. Role ambiguity: A review and integration of the literature. *Journal of Modern Business*, 3: 41-47.
- Beatty, C. A., & Lee, G. L. 1992. Leadership among middle managers: An exploration in the context of technological change. *Human Relations*, 45(9): 957-989.
- Beck, T., & Plowman, D. 2009. Experiencing rare and unusual events richly: The role of middle managers in animating and guiding organizational interpretation. *Organization Science*, 20(5): 909-924.

- Becker, T. E. 2005. Potential problems in the statistical control of variables in organizational research: A qualitative analysis with recommendations. *Organizational Research Methods*, 8: 274-289.
- Bedeian, A. G., & Armenakis, A. A. 1981. A path-analytic study of the consequences of role conflict and ambiguity. *Academy of Management Journal*, 24: 417-424.
- Bedeian, A. G., Armenakis, A. A., & Curran, S. M. 1981. The relationship between role stress and job-related, interpersonal, and organizational climate factors. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 113: 247-260.
- Behrman, D. N., & Perreault Jr, W. D. 1984. A role stress model of the performance and satisfaction of industrial salespersons. *Journal of Marketing*, 48: 9-21.
- Biddle, B. J. 1979. *Role theory: Expectations, identities, and behaviors*. New York: Academic Press
- Biddle, B. J. 1986. Recent development in role theory. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 12: 67-92.
- Bower, J. L. 1970. *Managing the resource allocation process*. Boston: Harvard University Press.
- Brief, A. P., & Aldag, R. J. 1976. Correlates of role indices. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 61: 468-472.
- Bryant, F. B., & Cvengros, J. A. 2004. Distinguishing hope and optimism: Two sides of a coin, or two separate coins? *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 23(2): 273-302.
- Burgelman, R. A. 1983a. Corporate entrepreneurship and strategic management: Insights from a process study. *Management Science*, 7: 1349-1364.
- Burgelman, R. A. 1983b. A process model of internal corporate venturing in the diversified major firm. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 28(2): 223-244.

- Burgelman, R. A. 1991. Intraorganizational ecology of strategy making and organizational adaptation: Theory and field research. *Organization Science*, 2: 239-262.
- Cameron, K., Dutton, J., & Quinn, R. 2003. *Positive organizational scholarship: Foundations of a new discipline*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
- Cammann, C., Fichman, M., Jenkins, D., & Klesh, J. 1983. Assessing the attitudes and perceptions of organizational members. In S. Seashore, E. Lawler, P. Mirvis, & C. Cammann (Eds.), *Assessing organizational change: A guide to methods, measures and practices*: 71-138. New York: Wiley.
- Carifio, J., & Rhodes, L. 2002. Construct validities and the empirical relationships between optimism, hope, self-efficacy, and locus of control. *Work*, 19: 125-136.
- Carney, M. 2004. Middle manager involvement in strategy development in not-for-profit organizations: The director of nursing perspective. *Journal of Nursing Management*, 12(1): 13-21.
- Carver, C. S., Pozo, C., Harris, S. D., Noriega, V., Scheier, M. F., Robinson, D. S., Ketcham, A. S., Moffat, F. L., & Clark, K. C. 1993. How coping mediates the effect of optimism on distress: A study of women with early stage breast cancer. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 65(2): 375-390.
- Chakravarthy, B. S. 1982. Adaptation: A promising metaphor for strategic management. *Academy of Management Review*, 7: 35-44.
- Chen, G., Gully, S. M., & Eden, D. 2001. Validation of a new general self-efficacy scale. *Organizational Research Methods*, 4(1): 62-83.

- Cohen, J., Cohen, P., West, S. G., & Aiken, L. S. 2003. *Applied multiple regression: Correlation analysis for the behavioral sciences* (3rd ed.). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Cole, M. S., Walter, F., & Bruch, H. 2008. Affective mechanisms linking dysfunctional behavior to performance in work teams: A moderated mediation study. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 93: 945-958.
- Coomber, B., & Barriball, L. 2007. Impact of job satisfaction components on intent to leave and turnover for hospital-based nurses: A review of the research literature. *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, 44: 297-314.
- Coutu, D. L. 2002. How resilience works. *Harvard Business Review*, 80(5): 46-50.
- Coverman, S. 1989. Role overload, role conflict, and stress: Addressing consequences of multiple role demands. *Social Forces*, 67: 965-982.
- Creswell, J. 2009. *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Currie, G., & Procter, S. J. 2005. The antecedents of middle managers' strategic contribution: The case of a professional bureaucracy. *Journal of Management Studies*, 42: 1325-1356.
- Curry, L. A., Snyder, C. R., Cook, D. L., Ruby, B. C., & Rehm, M. 1997. Role of hope in academic and sport achievement. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 73(6): 1257-1267.
- Dopson, S., & Stewart, R. 1990. What is happening to middle management? *British Journal of Management*, 1: 3-16.
- Dutton, J. E., & Ashford, S. J. 1993. Selling issues to top management. *Academy of Management Review*, 18(3): 397-428.

- Dutton, J. E., Ashford, S. J., Lawrence, K. A., & Miner-Rubino, K. 2002. Red light, green light: Making sense of the organizational context for issue selling. *Organization Science*, 13(4): 355-369.
- Dutton, J. E., Ashford, S. J., O'Neill, R. M., & Lawrence, K. A. 2001. Moves that matter: Issue selling and organizational change. *Academy of Management Journal*, 44(4): 716-736.
- Dutton, J. E., Ashford, S. J., O'Neill, R. M., Hayes, E., & Wierba, E. E. 1997. Reading the wind: How middle managers assess the context for selling issues to top managers. *Strategic Management Journal*, 18(5): 407-423.
- Eden, D. 1988. Pygmalion, goal setting, and expectancy: Compatible ways to raise productivity. *Academy of Management Review*, 13: 639-652.
- Eden, D. 2001. Means efficacy: External sources of general and specific subjective efficacy. In M. Erez, U. Kleinbeck, & H. Thierry (Eds.), *Work motivation in the context of a globalizing economy*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Edwards, J. R., & Lambert, L. S. 2007. Methods for integrating moderation and mediation: A general analytical framework using moderated path analysis. *Psychological Methods*, 12(1): 1-22.
- Fisher, C. D., & Gitelson, R. 1983. A meta-analysis of the correlates of role conflict and ambiguity. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 68: 320-333.
- Fitzgerald, T. E., Tennen, H., Affleck, G., & Pransky, G. S. 1993. The relative importance of dispositional optimism and control appraisals in quality of life after coronary artery bypass surgery. *Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, 16(1): 25-43.
- Floyd, S. W., & Wooldridge, B. 1992a. Managing strategic consensus: The foundation of effective implementation. *The Executive*, 6(4): 27-39.

- Floyd, S. W., & Wooldridge, B. 1992b. Middle management involvement in strategy and its association with strategic type: A research note. *Strategic Management Journal*, 13: 153-167.
- Floyd, S., & Lane, P. 2000. Strategizing throughout the organization: Managing role conflict in strategic renewal. *Academy of Management Review*, 25(1): 154-177.
- Floyd, S., & Wooldridge, B. 1997. Middle management's strategic influence and organizational performance. *Journal of Management Studies*, 34(3): 465-485.
- Foss, N. J. 2011. Why micro-foundations for Resource-Based Theory are needed and what they may look like. *Journal of Management*, 37: 1413-1428.
- Fredrickson, B. L. 1998. What good are positive emotions? *Review of General Psychology*, 2(3): 300-319.
- Fredrickson, B. L. 2001. The role of positive emotions in positive psychology: The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. *American Psychologist*, 56(3): 218-226.
- Fredrickson, B. L., & Joiner, T. 2002. Positive emotions trigger upward spirals toward emotional well-being. *Psychological Science*, 13(2): 172-175.
- Fulop, L. 1991. Middle managers: Victims or vanguards of the entrepreneurial movement? *Journal of Management Studies*, 28(1): 25-44.
- Gammelgaard, J. 2009. Issue selling and bargaining power in intrafirm competition: The differentiating impact of the subsidiary management composition. *Competition & Change*, 13(3): 214-228.
- Gavetti, G. 2005. Cognition and hierarchy: Rethinking the microfoundations of capabilities' development. *Organization Science*, 16: 599-617.

- Gong, Y., Shenkar, O., Luo, Y., & Nyaw, M.-K. 2001. Role conflict and ambiguity of CEOs in international joint ventures: A transaction cost perspective. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 86: 764-773.
- Goode, W. J. 1960. A theory of role strain. *American Sociological Review*, 25: 483-496.
- Graen, G. 1976. Role-making processes within complex organizations. In M. D. Dunnette (Ed.), *Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology*: 1201-1245. Chicago: Rand McNally.
- Gregson, T., & Wendell, J. 1994. Role conflict, role ambiguity, job satisfaction and the moderating effect of job-related self-esteem: A latent variable analysis. *Journal of Applied Business Research*, 10(2): 106-114.
- Griffeth, R. W., Hom, P. W., & Gaertner, S. 2000. A meta-analysis of antecedents and correlates of employee turnover: Update, moderator tests, and research implications for the next millennium. *Journal of Management*, 26(3): 463-488.
- Gross, N., Mason, W. S., & McEachern, A. W. 1958. *Explorations in role analysis: Studies of the school superintendency role*. New York: Wiley.
- Hamner, W. C., & Tosi, H. L. 1974. Relationship of role conflict and role ambiguity to job involvement measures. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 59: 497-499.
- Harland, L., Harrison, W., Jones, J. R., & Reiter-Palmon, R. 2005. Leadership behaviors and subordinate resilience. *Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies*, 11(2): 2-14.
- Harris, K. J., Kacmar, K. M., & Witt, L. 2005. An examination of the curvilinear relationship between leader-member exchange and intent to turnover. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 26(4): 363-378.

- Harris, M. M. 1991. Role conflict and role ambiguity as substance versus artifact: A confirmatory factor analysis of House, Schuler, and Levanoni's (1983) scales. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 76(1): 122-126.
- Hayes, A. F. 2012. PROCESS: A versatile computational tool for observed variable mediation, moderation, and conditional process modeling [White paper]. Retrieved from <http://www.afhayes.com/public/process2012.pdf>.
- He, Y., Zaslavsky, A. M., Landrum, M., Harrington, D., & Catalano, P. 2010. Multiple imputation in a large-scale complex survey: A practical guide. *Statistical methods in medical research*, 19: 653-670.
- Hom, P. W., & Griffeth, R. W. 1995. *Employee turnover*. Cincinnati, OH: South-western College Publishing.
- Hom, P., & Griffeth, R. 1991. Structural equations modeling test of a turnover theory: Cross-sectional and longitudinal analyses. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 76(3): 350-366.
- Hom, P., Caranikas-Walker, F., Prussia, G., & Griffeth, R. 1992. A meta-analytical structural equations analysis of a model of employee turnover. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 77(6): 890-909.
- House, R. J., Schuler, R. S., & Levanoni, E. 1983. Role conflict and ambiguity scales: Reality or artifacts? *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 68: 334-337.
- Howard-Grenville, J. A. 2007. Developing issue-selling effectiveness over time: Issue selling as resourcing. *Organization Science*, 18(4): 560-577.
- Hutt, M. D., Reingen, P. H., & Ronchetto, J. R. 1988. Tracing emergent processes in marketing strategy formation. *Journal of Marketing*, 52(1): 4-19.

- Huy, Q. 2002. Emotional balancing of organizational continuity and radical change: The contribution of middle managers. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 47(1): 31-69.
- Irving, L. M., Snyder, C. R., & Crowson, J. J. 1998. Hope and coping with cancer by college women. *Journal of Personality*, 66(2): 195-214.
- Ivancevich, J. M., Matteson, M. T., & Preston, C. 1982. Occupational stress, type A behavior, and physical well-being. *Academy of Management Journal*, 25: 373-391.
- Jackson, S. E. 1983. Participation in decision-making as a strategy for reducing job-related strain. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 68: 3-19.
- Jackson, S. E., & Schuler, R. S. 1985. A meta-analysis and conceptual critique of research on role ambiguity and role conflict in work settings. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 36: 16-78.
- Jarzabkowski, P., & Balogun, J. 2009. The practice and process of delivering integration through strategic planning. *Journal of Management Studies*, 46(8): 1255-1288.
- Johnson, T. W., & Graen, G. 1973. Organizational assimilation and role rejection. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, 10: 72-87.
- Judd, C. M., & Kenny, D. A. 2010. Data analysis in social psychology: Recent and recurring issues. In D. Gilbert, S. T. Fiske, & G. Lindzey (Eds.), *The handbook of social psychology*, 5th ed.: 115-139. New York: Wiley.
- Judge, T. A., & Bono, J. E. 2001. Relationship of core self-evaluations traits—self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, locus of control, and emotional stability—with job satisfaction and job performance: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 86(1): 80-92.

- Judge, T. A., Van Vianen, A. E. M., & De Pater, I. E. 2004. Emotional stability, core self-evaluations, and job outcomes: A review of the evidence and an agenda for future research. *Human Performance*, 17(3): 325-346.
- Kacmar, K. M., & Ferris, G. R. 1989. Theoretical and methodological considerations in the age-job satisfaction relationship. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 74(2): 201-207.
- Kahn, R. L., Wolfe, D. M., Quinn, R. P., Snoek, J. D., & Rosenthal, R. A. 1964. *Organizational stress: Studies in role conflict and ambiguity*. New York: Wiley.
- Kanter, R. M. 1983. Frontiers for strategic human resource planning and management. *Human Resource Management*, 22: 9-21.
- Katz, D., & Kahn, R. L. 1978. *The social psychology of organizations* (2nd ed.). New York: Wiley.
- Ketokivi, M., & Castañer, X. 2004. Strategic planning as an integrative device. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 49: 337-365.
- Khatri, N., Fern, C. T., & Budhwar, P. 2001. Explaining employee turnover in an Asian context. *Human Resource Management Journal*, 11(1): 54-74.
- King, A. W., Fowler, S. W., & Zeithaml, C. P. 2001. Managing organizational competencies for competitive advantage: The middle-management edge. *The Academy of Management Executive*, 15(2): 95-106.
- Larson, M., & Luthans, F. 2006. Potential added value of psychological capital in predicting work attitudes. *Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies*, 13(2): 75-92.
- Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. 1984. *Stress, appraisal, and coping*. New York: Springer.
- Levinson, D. J. 1959. Role, personality, and social structure in the organizational setting. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 58(2): 170-180.

- Likert, R. 1961. *New patterns of management*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Ling, Y., Floyd, S. W., & Baldrige, D. C. 2005. Toward a model of issue-selling by subsidiary managers in multinational organizations. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 36(6): 637-654.
- Little, R., & Rubin, D. 1987. *Statistical analysis with missing data*. New York: Wiley.
- Locke, E. A. 1976. The nature and causes of job satisfaction. In M. D. Dunnette (Ed.), *Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology*: 1319-1328. Chicago: Rand McNally.
- Lum, L., Kervin, J., Clark, K., Reid, F., & Sirola, W. 1998. Explaining nursing turnover intent: job satisfaction, pay satisfaction, or organizational commitment? *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 19(3): 305-320.
- Luthans, F. 2002a. The need for and meaning of positive organizational behavior. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 23(6): 695-706.
- Luthans, F. 2002b. Positive organizational behavior: Developing and managing psychological strengths. *Academy of Management Executive*, 16(1): 57-72.
- Luthans, F., & Youssef, C. 2007. Emerging positive organizational behavior. *Journal of Management*, 33(3): 321-349.
- Luthans, F., Avey, J. B., Avolio, B. J., & Peterson, S. J. 2010. The development and resulting performance impact of positive psychological capital. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 21(1): 41-67.
- Luthans, F., Avolio, B. J., Avey, J. B., & Norman, S. M. 2007a. Positive psychological capital: Measurement and relationship with performance and satisfaction. *Personnel Psychology*, 60(3): 541-572.

- Luthans, F., Avolio, B. J., Walumbwa, F. O., & Li, W. 2005. The psychological capital of Chinese workers: Exploring the relationship with performance. *Management and Organization Review*, 1(2): 249-271.
- Luthans, F., Norman, S. M., Avolio, B. J., & Avey, J. B. 2008. The mediating role of psychological capital in the supportive organizational climate—employee performance relationship. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 29(2): 219-238.
- Luthans, F., Vogelgesang, G. R., & Lester, P. B. 2006. Developing the psychological capital of resiliency. *Human Resource Development Review*, 5(1): 25-44.
- Luthans, F., Youssef, C. M., & Avolio, B. J. 2007b. *Psychological capital: Developing the human competitive edge*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Luthans, K. W., & Jensen, S. M. 2005. The linkage between psychological capital and commitment to organizational mission: A study of nurses. *Journal of Nursing Administration*, 35(6): 304-310.
- Lyons, T. F. 1971. Role clarity, need for clarity, satisfaction, tension, and withdrawal. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, 6: 99-110.
- MacKinnon, D. P., Lockwood, C. M., & Williams, J. 2004. Confidence limits for the indirect effect: Distribution of the produce and resampling methods. *Multivariate Behavioral Research*, 39: 99-128.
- Maddi, S. R. 1987. Hardiness training at Illinois Bell Telephone. In P. Opatz (Ed.), *Health promotion evaluation*: 101-115. Stevens Point, WI: National Wellness Institute.
- Magaletta, P. R., & Oliver, J. M. 1999. The hope construct, will, and ways: Their relations with self-efficacy, optimism, and general well-being. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 55(5): 539-551.

- Mair, J. 2005. Exploring the determinants of unit performance. *Group & Organization Management*, 30(3): 263-288.
- Mantere, S. 2005. Strategic practices as enablers and disablers of championing activity. *Strategic Organization*, 3(2): 157-184.
- Mantere, S., & Vaara, E. 2008. On the problem of participation in strategy: A critical discursive perspective. *Organization Science*, 19(2): 341-358.
- McGee, G. W., Ferguson, C. E., & Seers, A. 1989. Role conflict and role ambiguity: Do the scales measure these two constructs? *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 74(5): 815-818.
- Michaels, R. E., Day, R. L., & Joachimsthaler, E. A. 1987. Role stress among industrial buyers: An integrative model. *Journal of Marketing*, 51(2): 28-45.
- Miles, R. H., & Perreault, W. D. 1976. Organizational role conflict: Its antecedents and consequences. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, 17: 19-44.
- Mintzberg, H. 1978. Patterns in strategy formation. *Management Science*, 24: 934-948.
- Mintzberg, H., & Waters, J. 1985. Of strategies, deliberate and emergent. *Strategic Management Journal*, 6(3): 257-272.
- Mobley, W., Griffeth, R., Hand, H., & Meglino, B. 1979. Review and conceptual analysis of the employee turnover process. *Psychological Bulletin*, 86(3): 493-522.
- Mobley, W., Horner, S., & Hollingsworth, A. 1978. An evaluation of precursors of hospital employee turnover. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 63(4): 408-414.
- Muller, D., Judd, C. M., & Yzerbyt, V. Y. 2005. When moderation is mediated and mediation is moderated. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 89(6): 852-863.
- Neiman, L. J., & Hughes, J. W. 1951. Problem of the concept of role: A resurvey of the literature. *Social Forces*, 30: 141-149.

- Nonaka, I. 1988. Toward middle-up-down management: accelerating information creation. *Sloan Management Review*, 29(3): 9-18.
- Nonaka, I. 1994. A dynamic theory of knowledge creation. *Organization Science*, 5: 14-37.
- Norman, S. M., Avey, J. B., Nimnicht, J. L., & Pigeon, N. G. 2010. The interactive effects of psychological capital and organizational identity on employee organizational citizenship and deviance behaviors. *Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies*, 17(4): 380-391.
- Nunnally, J. C., & Bernstein, I. H. 1994. *Psychometric theory*, (3rd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Nutt, P. C. 1987. Identifying and appraising how managers install strategy. *Strategic Management Journal*, 8: 1-14.
- Oeser, O. A., & Harary, F. 1964. A mathematical model for structural role theory, II. *Human Relations*, 17: 3-17.
- Onwuegbuzie, A. J., & Snyder, C. R. 2000. Relations between hope and graduate students' coping strategies for studying and examination-taking. *Psychological Reports*, 86(3): 803-806.
- O'Reilly, C. A., & Chatman, J. 1986. Organizational commitment and psychological attachment: The effects of compliance, identification, and internalization on prosocial behavior. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 71(3): 492-499.
- Örtqvist, D., & Wincent, J. 2006. Prominent consequences of role stress: A meta-analytic review. *International Journal of Stress Management*, 13: 399-422.

- Pappas, J. M., & Wooldridge, B. 2007. Middle managers' divergent strategic activity: An investigation of multiple measures of network centrality. *Journal of Management Studies*, 44: 323-341.
- Peterson, C. 2000. The future of optimism. *American Psychologist*, 55(1): 44-55.
- Peterson, R. S., Smith, D. B., Martorana, P. V., & Owens, P. D. 2003. The impact of chief executive officer personality on top management team dynamics: One mechanism by which leadership affects organizational performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88(5): 795-808.
- Peterson, S. J., & Byron, K. 2008. Exploring the role of hope in job performance: Results from four studies. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 29(6): 785-803.
- Peterson, S. J., & Luthans, F. 2003. The positive impact and development of hopeful leaders. *Leadership and Organization Development Journal*, 24(1): 26-31.
- Porter, L. W., & Lawler, E. E. 1965. Properties of organization structure in relation to job attitudes and job behavior. *Psychological Bulletin*, 64: 23-51.
- Preacher, K. J., & Hayes, A. F. 2004. SPSS and SAS procedures for estimating indirect effects in simple mediation models. *Behavior Research Methods, Instruments, and Computers*, 36: 717-731.
- Preacher, K. J., Rucker, D. D., & Hayes, A. F. 2007. Addressing moderated mediation hypotheses: Theory, methods, and prescriptions. *Multivariate Behavioral Research*, 42: 185-227.
- Rego, A., Marques, C., Leal, S., Sousa, F., & Cunha, M. P. 2010. Psychological capital and performance of Portuguese civil servants: exploring neutralizers in the context of an

- appraisal system. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 21(9): 1531-1552.
- Richardson, G. E. 2002. The metatheory of resilience and resiliency. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 58(3): 307-321.
- Rizzo, J. R., House, R. J., & Lirtzman, S. I. 1970. Role conflict and ambiguity in complex organizations. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 15: 150-163.
- Roth, P. L. 1994. Missing data: A conceptual review for applied psychologists. *Personnel Psychology*, 47(3): 537-560.
- Rousseau, D. M. 1978. Characteristics of departments, positions and individuals: Contexts for attitudes and behavior *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 23: 521-539.
- Royston, P. 2004. Multiple imputation of missing values. *Stata Journal*, 4: 227-241.
- Sadri, G., & Robertson, I. T. 1993. Self-efficacy and work-related behaviour: A review and meta-analysis. *Applied Psychology*, 42(2): 139-152.
- Saks, A. M., & Ashforth, B. E. 1997. A longitudinal investigation of the relationships between job information sources, applicant perceptions of fit, and work outcomes. *Personnel psychology*, 50(2): 395-426.
- Scheier, M. E., & Carver, C. S. 1987. Dispositional optimism and physical well-being: The influence of generalized outcome expectancies on health. *Journal of Personality*, 55(2): 169-210.
- Scheier, M. F., & Carver, C. S. 1985. Optimism, coping, and health: Assessment and implications of generalized outcome expectancies. *Health Psychology*, 4(3): 219-247.

- Scheier, M. F., & Carver, C. S. 1992. Effects of optimism on psychological and physical well-being: Theoretical overview and empirical update. *Cognitive Therapy and Research*, 16(2): 201-228.
- Schendel, D., & Hofer, C. 1979. *Strategic management: A new view of business policy and planning*. Boston: Little Brown.
- Schilit, W. K., & Locke, E. A. 1982. A study of upward influence in organizations. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 27(2): 304-316.
- Schuler, R. S., Aldag, R. J., & Brief, A. P. 1977. Role conflict and ambiguity: A scale analysis. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, 20: 111-128.
- Schwab, D. P. 1980. Construct validity in organizational behavior. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 2(1): 3-43.
- Seligman, M. E. P. 1998. *Learned optimism*. New York: Pocket Books.
- Seligman, M. E. P., Steen, T. A., Park, N., & Peterson, C. 2005. Positive psychology progress: Empirical validation of interventions. *American Psychologist*, 60(5): 410-421.
- Shapiro, S. S., & Wilk, M. B. 1965. An analysis of variance test for normality (complete samples). *Biometrika*, 52: 591-611.
- Shepard, J. M. 1969. Functional specialization, alienation, and job satisfaction. *Industrial & Labor Relations Review*, 23: 207-219.
- Shifren, K., & Hooker, K. 1995. Stability and change in optimism. *Experimental Aging Research*, 21: 59-76.
- Shnek, Z. M., Irvine, J., Stewart, D., & Abbey, S. 2001. Psychological factors and depressive symptoms in ischemic heart disease. *Health Psychology*, 20(2): 141-145.

- Siebert, S. D. 1974. Toward a theory of role accumulation. *American Sociological Review*, 39: 567-578.
- Smith, C. S., Tisak, J., & Schmieder, R. A. 1993. The measurement properties of the role conflict and role ambiguity scales: A review and extension of the empirical research. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 14(1): 37-48.
- Snyder, C. R. 1994. *The psychology of hope: You can get there from here*. New York: Free Press.
- Snyder, C. R. 2000. Genesis: Birth and growth of hope. In C. R. Snyder (Ed.), *Handbook of hope: Theory, measures, and applications*: 25-57. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Snyder, C. R., Harris, C., Anderson, J. R., Holleran, S. A., Irving, L. M., Sigmon, S. T., Yoshinobu, L., Gibb, J., Langelle, C., & Harney, P. 1991a. The will and the ways: Development and validation of an individual-differences measure of hope. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 60(4): 570-585.
- Snyder, C. R., Irving, L. M., & Anderson, J. R. 1991b. Hope and health. In C. R. Snyder, & D. R. Forsyth (Eds.), *Handbook of social and clinical psychology: The health perspective*, Vol. 162: 285-305. Elmsford, NY: Pergamon Press.
- Snyder, C. R., Sympton, S. C., Ybasco, F. C., Borders, T. F., Babyak, M. A., & Higgins, R. L. 1996. Development and validation of the State Hope Scale. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 70(2): 321-335.
- Snyder, C., Lopez, S. J., Shorey, H. S., Rand, K. L., & Feldman, D. B. 2003. Hope theory, measurements, and applications to school psychology. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 18(2): 122-139.

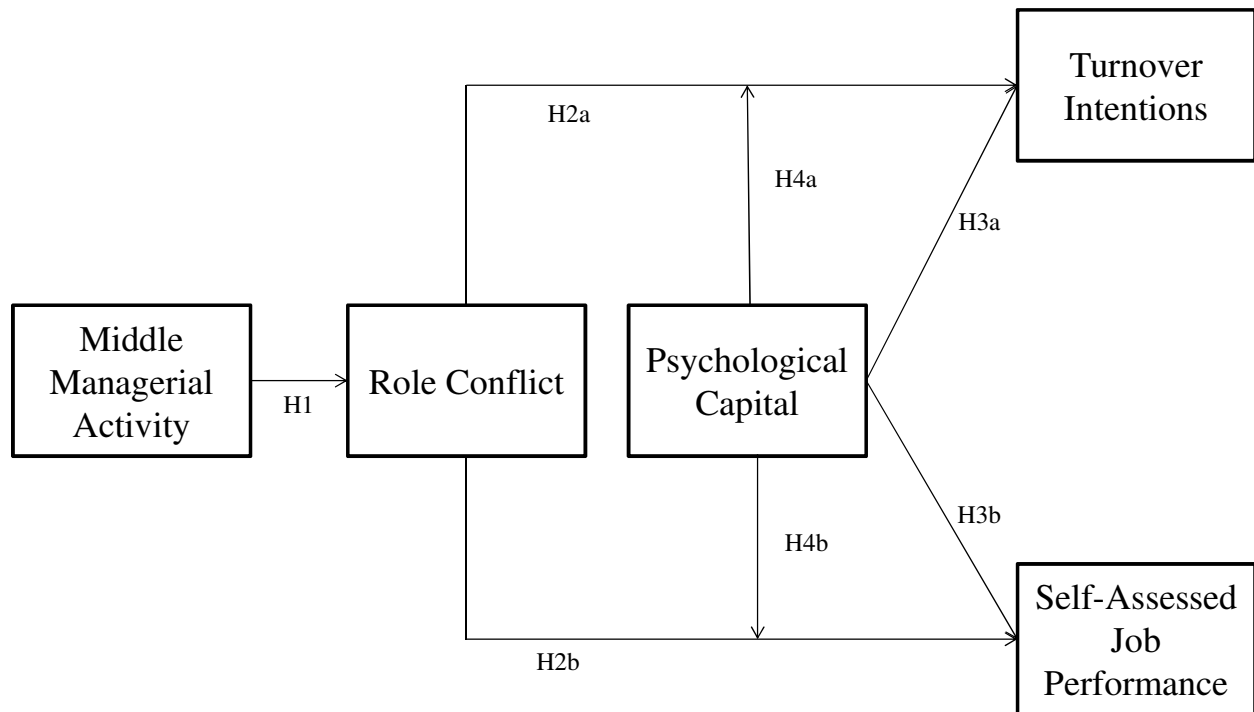
- Sobel, M. E. 1982. Asymptotic intervals for indirect effects in structural equations models. In S. Leinhardt (Ed.), *Sociological methodology*: 290-312. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Sparrowe, R. T., Liden, R. C., Wayne, S. J., & Kraimer, M. L. 2001. Social networks and the performance of individuals and groups. *Academy of Management Journal*, 44(2): 316-325.
- Stajkovic, A. D., & Luthans, F. 1998a. Self-efficacy and work-related performance: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 124(2): 240-261.
- Stajkovic, A. D., & Luthans, F. 1998b. Social cognitive theory and self-efficacy: Going beyond traditional motivational and behavioral approaches. *Organizational Dynamics*, 26: 62-74.
- Stanton, A. L., & Snider, P. R. 1993. Coping with a breast cancer diagnosis: A prospective study. *Health Psychology*, 12(1): 16-23.
- Stanton, J. M., & Weiss, E. M. 2002. Online panels for social science research: An introduction to The StudyResponse Project. (Tech. Rep. No. 13001). Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University, School of Information Studies.
- Stone, E. F. 1975. Job scope, job satisfaction, and the protestant ethic: A study of enlisted men in the US Navy. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 7: 215-224.
- Stone, E. F. 1976. The moderating effect of work-related values on the job scope-job satisfaction relationship. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, 15(2): 147-167.
- Stotland, E. 1969. *The psychology of hope: An integration of experimental, clinical, and social approaches*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

- Stumpf, S. A., & Rabinowitz, S. 1981. Career stage as a moderator of performance relationships with facets of job satisfaction and role perceptions. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 18(2): 202-218.
- Szilagyi, A. D. 1977. An empirical test of causal inference between role perceptions, satisfaction with work, performance and organizational level. *Personnel Psychology*, 30: 375-388.
- Teece, D. J. 2007. Explicating dynamic capabilities: The nature and microfoundations of (sustainable) enterprise performance. *Strategic Management Journal*, 28: 1319-1350.
- Tracy, L., & Johnson, T. W. 1981. What do the role conflict and role ambiguity scales measure? . *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 66: 464-469.
- Tubre, T. C., & Collins, J. M. 2000. Jackson and Schuler (1985) revisited: A meta-analysis of the relationships between role ambiguity, role conflict, and job performance. *Journal of Management*, 26: 155-169.
- Turnley, W. H., Bolino, M. C., Lester, S. W., & Bloodgood, J. M. 2003. The impact of psychological contract fulfillment on the performance of in-role and organizational citizenship behaviors. *Journal of Management*, 29(2): 187-206.
- Uyterhoven, H. E. R. 1972. General managers in the middle. *Harvard Business Review*, 50(2): 75-85.
- Van Buuren, S., Brand, J., Groothuis-Oudshoorn, C., & Rubin, D. B. 2006. Fully conditional specification in multivariate imputation. *Journal of Statistical Computation and Simulation*, 76: 1049-1064.
- Van Sell, M., Brief, A. P., & Schuler, R. S. 1981. Role conflict and role ambiguity: Integration of the literature and directions for future research. *Human Relations*, 34: 43-71.

- Wagnild, G. 2009. A review of the Resilience Scale. *Journal of Nursing Measurement*, 17(2): 105-113.
- Wagnild, G. M., & Young, H. M. 1993. Development and psychometric evaluation of the Resilience Scale. *Journal of Nursing Measurement*, 1(2): 165-178.
- Wagnild, G., & Young, H. 1990. Resilience among older women. *Image: Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, 22: 252-255.
- Walker, O. C. J., Churchill, G. A. J., & Ford, N. M. 1975. Organizational determinants of the industrial salesman's role conflict and ambiguity. *Journal of Marketing*, 39: 32-39.
- Wandeler, C. A., & Bundick, M. J. 2011. Hope and self-determination of young adults in the workplace. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 6(5): 341-354.
- Westley, F. R. 1990. Middle managers and strategy: Microdynamics of inclusion. *Strategic Management Journal*, 11(5): 337-351.
- Williams, L. J., & Anderson, S. E. 1991. Job satisfaction and organizational commitment as predictors of organizational citizenship and in-role behaviors. *Journal of Management*, 17(3): 601-617.
- Winship, C., & Mandel, M. 1983. Roles and positions: A critique and extension of the blockmodeling approach. In S. Leinhardt (Ed.), *Sociological Methodology*, Vol. 14: 314-344. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Wooldridge, B., & Floyd, S. 1990. The strategy process, middle management, and organizational performance. *Strategic Management Journal*, 11(3): 231-241.
- Wooldridge, B., Schmid, T., & Floyd, S. W. 2008. The middle management perspective on strategy process: Contributions, synthesis, and future research. *Journal of Management*, 34: 1190-1222.

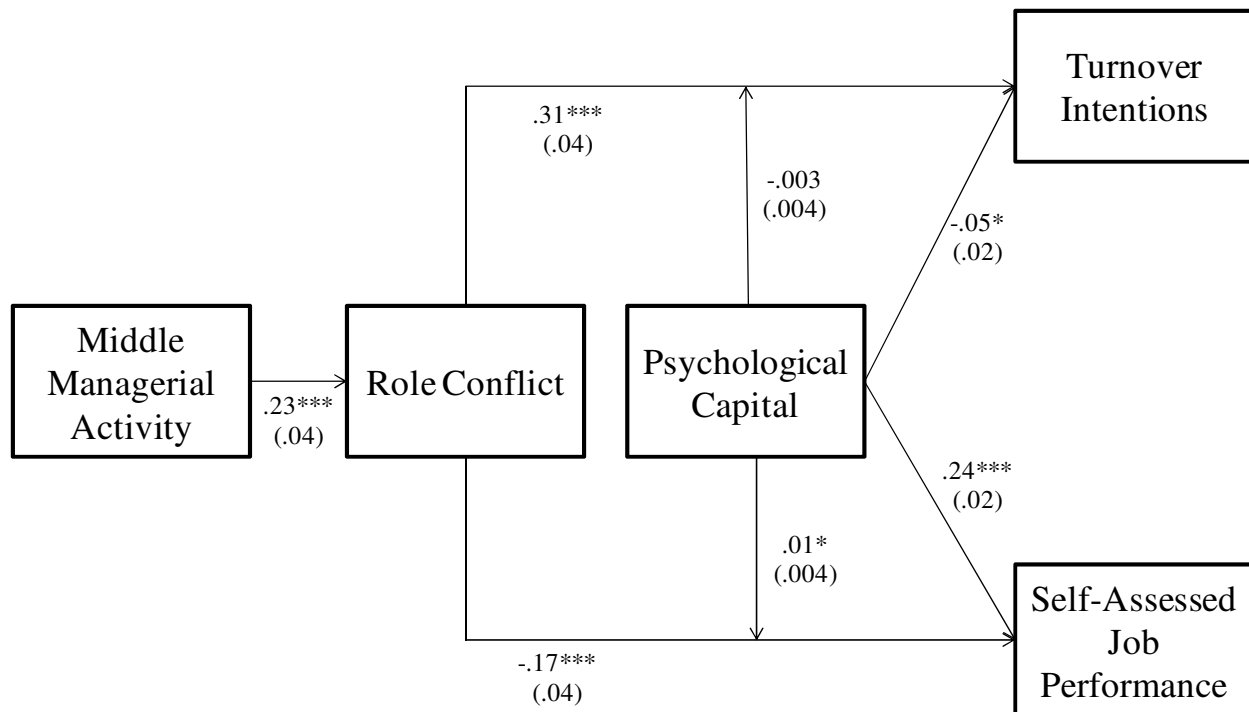
- Wright, T. A., & Bonett, D. G. 2002. The moderating effects of employee tenure on the relation between organizational commitment and job performance: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 87: 1183-1190.
- Youssef, C. M., & Luthans, F. 2007. Positive organizational behavior in the workplace. *Journal of Management*, 33(5): 774-800.
- Zhang, A. Y., Tsui, A. S., Song, L. J., Li, C., & Jia, L. 2008. How do I trust thee? The employee-organization relationship, supervisory support, and middle manager trust in the organization. *Human Resource Management*, 47: 111-132.
- Zunz, S. J. 1998. Resiliency and burnout. *Administration in Social Work*, 22(3): 39-54.

## Appendix



**Figure 1: Theoretical Model of Study Variables with Hypotheses**

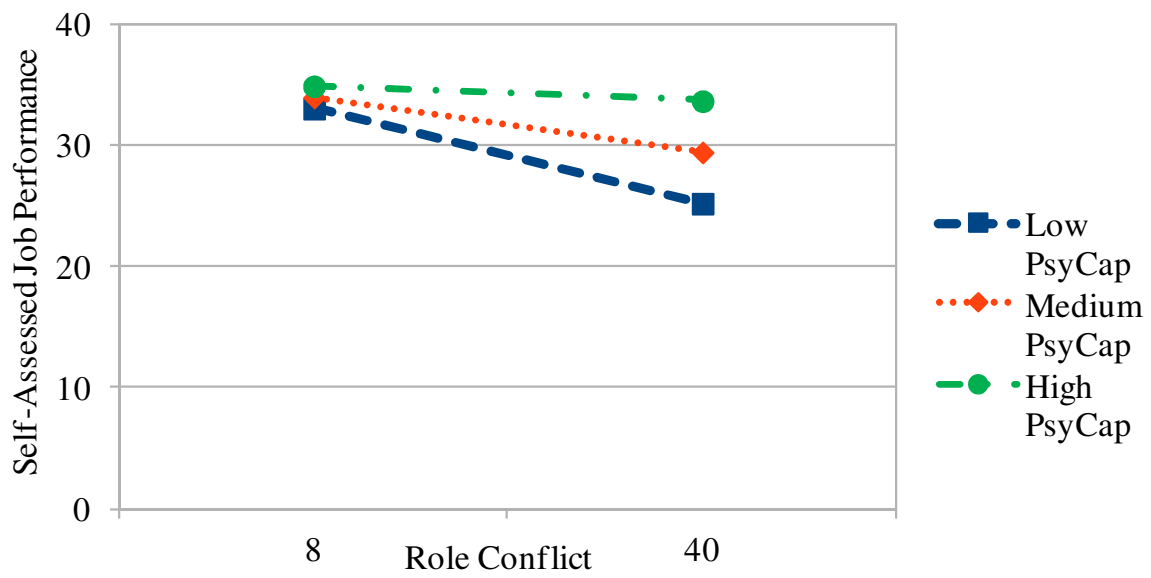
Figure 1 presents the theoretical model that describes the hypotheses that assess the relationships among the study variables.



Note. \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$  \*\*  $p < 0.01$  \*  $p < 0.05$  †  $p < 0.1$

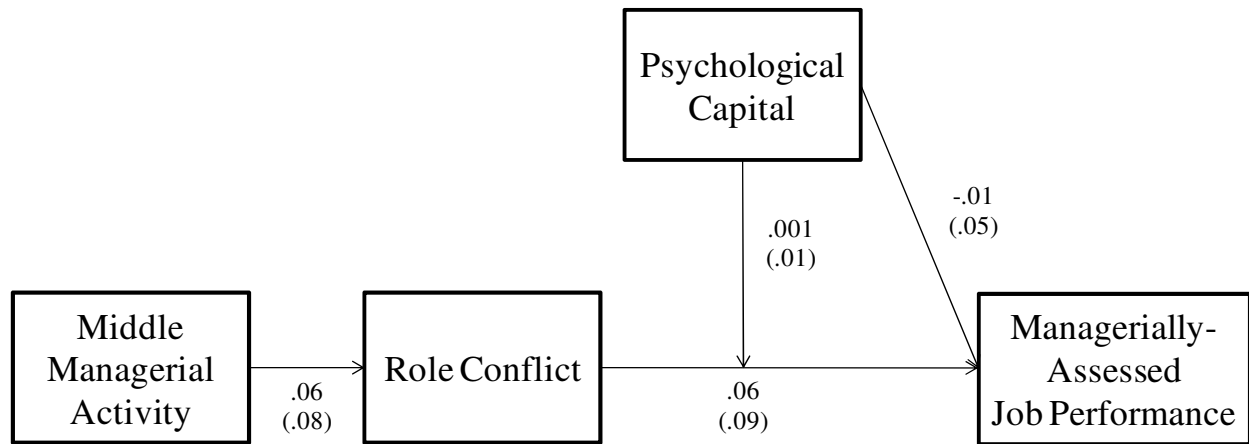
**Figure 2. Coefficients and Standard Errors for Theoretical Model**

Figure 2 presents the coefficients and standard errors for each of the paths in the theoretical model.



**Figure 3. Simple Slopes for Self-Assessed Job Performance**

Figure 3 presents the simple slopes for self-assessed job performance predicted by role conflict moderated by psychological capital (PsyCap).



**Figure 4. Coefficients and Standard Errors for Theoretical Model for Managerially-assessed Job Performance**

Figure 4 displays the coefficients and standard errors for the theoretical model of managerially-assessed job performance.

**Table 1: Correlation Matrix with Descriptive Statistics**

|                                                    | Mean <sup>a</sup> | S.D.  | Skew  | Kurtosis | Middle<br>Manager<br>Activity | Role Conflict | Psychological<br>Capital | Turnover<br>Intentions | Self-Assessed<br>Job<br>Performance | Managerially-<br>Assessed Job<br>Performance | Male    | Organizational<br>Tenure | Position<br>Tenure |
|----------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-------|-------|----------|-------------------------------|---------------|--------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|---------|--------------------------|--------------------|
| Middle Manager Activity                            | 56.65             | 10.63 | -0.63 | 4.31     | <i>0.91<sup>b</sup></i>       |               |                          |                        |                                     |                                              |         |                          |                    |
| Role Conflict                                      | 24.06             | 6.24  | -0.15 | 2.82     | .38***                        | <i>0.86</i>   |                          |                        |                                     |                                              |         |                          |                    |
| Psychological Capital                              | 94.86             | 10.33 | -0.39 | 3.11     | .20**                         | -.20**        | <i>0.86</i>              |                        |                                     |                                              |         |                          |                    |
| Turnover Intentions <sup>c</sup>                   | 6.713             | 3.52  | 0.63  | 2.42     | 0.17**                        | 0.56***       | -.28***                  | <i>0.91</i>            |                                     |                                              |         |                          |                    |
| Self-Assessed Job Performance <sup>c</sup>         | 29.93             | 4.28  | -0.88 | 3.57     | -0.01                         | -0.35***      | 0.62***                  | -0.40***               | <i>0.82</i>                         |                                              |         |                          |                    |
| Managerially-Assessed Job Performance <sup>d</sup> | 31.48             | 3.19  | -1.47 | 6.34     | -0.23†                        | 0.03          | -.07                     | 0.07                   | -.04                                | <i>0.85</i>                                  |         |                          |                    |
| Male                                               | 0.65              | 0.48  | -0.66 | 1.43     | 0.14*                         | 0.12†         | 0.05                     | -.01                   | -.11                                | -.13                                         | -       |                          |                    |
| Organizational Tenure                              | 11.82             | 7.65  | 1.27  | 4.74     | 0.05                          | -.09          | 0.24**                   | -0.21***               | 0.15*                               | 0.17                                         | 0.08    | -                        |                    |
| Position Tenure                                    | 6                 | 4.19  | 1.09  | 3.89     | 0.11†                         | 0.05          | 0.06                     | 0.07                   | 0.08                                | 0.03                                         | -0.21** | 0.43***                  | -                  |

Notes. <sup>a</sup> The means presented here are from the uncentered scales.

<sup>b</sup> Cronbach's alphas are presented on the diagonal.

<sup>c</sup> *n* = 240 middle managers

<sup>d</sup> *n* = 62 middle managers

\*\*\* *p* < 0.001 \*\* *p* < 0.01 \* *p* < 0.05 † *p* < 0.1

**Table 2: Regression Results for Simple Mediation for Turnover Intentions**

| Variable                                                                                 | <i>b</i> | <i>SE</i> | <i>t</i>  | <i>p</i>  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Direct and total effects                                                                 |          |           |           |           |
| Turnover Intentions regressed on Middle Manager Activity:                                | 0.06     | 0.02      | 2.64      | 0.01      |
| Role Conflict regressed on Middle Manager Activity:                                      | 0.23     | 0.04      | 6.34      | 0.000     |
| Turnover Intentions regressed on Role Conflict, controlling for Middle Manager Activity: | 0.31     | 0.04      | 8.64      | 0.000     |
| Turnover Intentions regressed on Middle Manager Activity, controlling for Role Conflict: | 0.003    | 0.02      | 0.16      | 0.87      |
|                                                                                          | Value    | <i>SE</i> | <i>z</i>  | <i>p</i>  |
| Indirect effect and significance using normal distribution                               |          |           |           |           |
| Sobel                                                                                    | 0.07     | 0.01      | 5.31      | 0.000     |
|                                                                                          | <i>M</i> | <i>SE</i> | LL 99% CI | UL 99% CI |
| Bootstrap results for indirect effect                                                    |          |           |           |           |
| Effect                                                                                   | 0.07     | 0.02      | 0.04      | 0.11      |

*Note.* *n* = 240 middle managers. Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported. Bootstrap sample size = 1,000. LL = lower limit; CI = confidence interval; UL = upper limit.

**Table 3: Regression Results for Conditional Indirect Effect on Turnover Intentions**

| Predictor                                        | <i>b</i>             | <i>SE</i>      | <i>t</i>  | <i>p</i>  |
|--------------------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------|-----------|-----------|
| Role conflict                                    |                      |                |           |           |
| Constant                                         | -0.71                | 0.64           | -1.11     | 0.27      |
| Middle Manager Activity                          | 0.23                 | 0.04           | 6.34      | 0.000     |
| Organizational Tenure                            | -0.1                 | 0.05           | -1.95     | 0.05      |
| Male                                             | 1.03                 | 0.79           | 1.3       | 0.19      |
| Turnover Intentions                              |                      |                |           |           |
| Constant                                         | 0.29                 | 0.32           | 0.9       | 0.37      |
| Middle Manager Activity                          | 0.003                | 0.02           | 0.16      | 0.87      |
| Role Conflict (RC)                               | 0.31                 | 0.04           | 8.64      | 0.000     |
| Psychological Capital (PC)                       | -0.05                | 0.02           | -2.47     | 0.01      |
| RC x PC                                          | -0.003               | 0.004          | -0.82     | 0.41      |
| Organizational Tenure                            | -0.06                | 0.02           | -2.24     | 0.03      |
| Male                                             | -0.48                | 0.39           | -1.22     | 0.22      |
| Psychological Capital                            | Boot indirect effect | Boot <i>SE</i> | Boot LLCI | Boot ULCI |
| Conditional indirect effect at PsyCap = M ± 1 SD |                      |                |           |           |
| -1 SD (-10.3)                                    | 0.08                 | 0.02           | 0.05      | 0.11      |
| M (0)                                            | 0.07                 | 0.02           | 0.04      | 0.10      |
| +1 SD (10.3)                                     | 0.06                 | 0.02           | 0.03      | 0.10      |

*Note.* *n* = 240 middle managers. Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported. Bootstrap sample size = 1,000.

**Table 4: Regression Results for Simple Mediation for Self-Assessed Job Performance**

| Variable                                                                                           | <i>b</i> | <i>SE</i> | <i>t</i>  | <i>p</i>  |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Direct and total effects                                                                           |          |           |           |           |
| Self-Assessed Job Performance regressed on Middle Manager Activity:                                | -0.01    | 0.03      | -0.18     | 0.86      |
| Role Conflict regressed on Middle Manager Activity:                                                | 0.23     | 0.04      | 6.34      | 0.000     |
| Self-Assessed Job Performance regressed on Role Conflict, controlling for Middle Manager Activity: | -0.17    | 0.04      | -4.31     | 0.000     |
| Self-Assessed Job Performance regressed on Middle Manager Activity, controlling for Role Conflict: | -0.02    | 0.02      | -0.73     | 0.4635    |
|                                                                                                    | Value    | <i>SE</i> | <i>z</i>  | <i>p</i>  |
| Indirect effect and significance using normal distribution                                         |          |           |           |           |
| Sobel                                                                                              | -0.06    | 0.01      | -4.23     | 0.000     |
|                                                                                                    | <i>M</i> | <i>SE</i> | LL 99% CI | UL 99% CI |
| Bootstrap results for indirect effect                                                              |          |           |           |           |
| Effect                                                                                             | -0.06    | 0.01      | -0.09     | -0.03     |

*Note.* *n* = 240 middle managers. Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported. Bootstrap sample size = 1,000. LL = lower limit; CI = confidence interval; UL = upper limit.

**Table 5: Regression Results for Conditional Indirect Effect on Self-Assessed Job Performance**

| Predictor                                        | <i>b</i>             | <i>SE</i>      | <i>t</i>  | <i>p</i>  |
|--------------------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------|-----------|-----------|
| Role conflict                                    |                      |                |           |           |
| Constant                                         | -0.71                | 0.64           | -1.11     | 0.27      |
| Middle Manager Activity                          | 0.23                 | 0.04           | 6.34      | 0.000     |
| Organizational Tenure                            | -0.1                 | 0.05           | -1.95     | 0.05      |
| Male                                             | 1.03                 | 0.79           | 1.3       | 0.19      |
| Self-Assessed Job Performance                    |                      |                |           |           |
| Constant                                         | 0.66                 | 0.36           | 1.84      | 0.07      |
| Middle Manager Activity                          | -0.02                | 0.02           | -7.3      | 0.46      |
| Role Conflict (RC)                               | -0.17                | 0.04           | -4.31     | 0.000     |
| Psychological Capital (PC)                       | 0.24                 | 0.02           | 11.22     | 0.000     |
| RC x PC                                          | 0.01                 | 0.004          | 2.41      | 0.02      |
| Organizational Tenure                            | -0.003               | 0.03           | -0.09     | 0.93      |
| Male                                             | -0.89                | 0.44           | -2.02     | 0.04      |
| Psychological Capital                            | Boot indirect effect | Boot <i>SE</i> | Boot LLCI | Boot ULCI |
| Conditional indirect effect at PsyCap = M ± 1 SD |                      |                |           |           |
| -1 SD (-10.3)                                    | -0.06                | 0.02           | -0.1      | -0.03     |
| M (0)                                            | -0.04                | 0.01           | -0.07     | -0.02     |
| +1 SD (10.3)                                     | -0.02                | 0.01           | -0.043    | 0.01      |

*Note.* *n* = 240 middle managers. Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported. Bootstrap sample size = 1,000.

**Table 6: Regression Results for Simple Mediation for Managerially-Assessed Job Performance**

| Variable                                                                                                   | <i>b</i> | <i>SE</i> | <i>t</i>  | <i>p</i>  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Direct and total effects                                                                                   |          |           |           |           |
| Managerially Assessed Job Performance regressed on Middle Manager Activity:                                | -0.09    | 0.05      | -1.82     | 0.07      |
| Role Conflict regressed on Middle Manager Activity:                                                        | 0.06     | 0.08      | 0.75      | 0.46      |
| Managerially Assessed Job Performance regressed on Role Conflict, controlling for Middle Manager Activity: | 0.06     | 0.09      | 0.71      | 0.480     |
| Managerially Assessed Job Performance regressed on Middle Manager Activity, controlling for Role Conflict: | -0.11    | 0.06      | -1.89     | 0.06      |
|                                                                                                            | Value    | <i>SE</i> | <i>z</i>  | <i>p</i>  |
| Indirect effect and significance using normal distribution                                                 |          |           |           |           |
| Sobel                                                                                                      | 0.004    | 0.01      | 0.39      | 0.70      |
|                                                                                                            | <i>M</i> | <i>SE</i> | LL 99% CI | UL 99% CI |
| Bootstrap results for indirect effect                                                                      |          |           |           |           |
| Effect                                                                                                     | 0.004    | 0.01      | -0.004    | 0.04      |

*Note.* *n* = 62 middle managers. Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported. Bootstrap sample size = 1,000. LL = lower limit; CI = confidence interval; UL = upper limit.

**Table 7: Regression Results for Conditional Indirect Effect on Managerially-Assessed Job Performance**

| Predictor                                        | <i>b</i>             | <i>SE</i>      | <i>t</i>  | <i>p</i>  |
|--------------------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------|-----------|-----------|
| Role conflict                                    |                      |                |           |           |
| Constant                                         | 2.25                 | 1.58           | 1.42      | 0.16      |
| Middle Manager Activity                          | 0.06                 | 0.08           | 0.75      | 0.46      |
| Organizational Tenure                            | -0.1                 | 0.07           | -1.59     | 0.12      |
| Male                                             | -1.94                | 1.67           | -1.16     | 0.25      |
| Managerially-Assessed Job Performance            |                      |                |           |           |
| Constant                                         | 0.14                 | 1.09           | 0.13      | 0.9       |
| Middle Manager Activity                          | -0.11                | 0.06           | -1.9      | 0.06      |
| Role Conflict (RC)                               | 0.06                 | 0.09           | 0.71      | 0.48      |
| Psychological Capital (PC)                       | -0.01                | 0.05           | -0.26     | 0.80      |
| RC x PC                                          | 0.001                | 0.01           | 0.06      | 0.95      |
| Organizational Tenure                            | 0.08                 | 0.05           | 1.78      | 0.08      |
| Male                                             | -0.87                | 1.16           | -0.75     | 0.46      |
| Psychological Capital                            | Boot indirect effect | Boot <i>SE</i> | Boot LLCI | Boot ULCI |
| Conditional indirect effect at PsyCap = M ± 1 SD |                      |                |           |           |
| -1 SD (-8.29)                                    | 0.003                | 0.01           | -0.01     | 0.04      |
| M (0)                                            | 0.004                | 0.01           | -0.004    | 0.04      |
| +1 SD (8.29)                                     | 0.004                | 0.01           | -0.01     | 0.06      |

*Note.* *n* = 63 middle managers. Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported. Bootstrap sample size = 1,000.

**Table 8: Summary of Findings by Hypothesis**

| <b>Hypothesis</b> | <b>Restatement</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <b>DV</b>                             | <b>Supported</b> |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------|
| 1                 | Middle manager activity will be positively related to role conflict.                                                                                                                                                                                                | Role Conflict                         | Supported        |
| 2a                | Role conflict will mediate the relationship between middle manager activity and turnover intentions.                                                                                                                                                                | Turnover Intentions                   | Supported        |
| 2b                | Role conflict will mediate the relationship between middle manager activity and job performance.                                                                                                                                                                    | Self-report Job Performance           | Supported        |
|                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Managerially-Assessed Job Performance | Not supported    |
| 3a                | Psychological capital will be negatively related to turnover intentions.                                                                                                                                                                                            | Turnover Intentions                   | Supported        |
| 3b                | Psychological capital will be positively related to job performance.                                                                                                                                                                                                | Self-report Job Performance           | Supported        |
|                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Managerially-Assessed Job             | Not supported    |
| 4a                | The effect of role conflict on an individual's turnover intentions depends on the level of psychological capital, such that the effect of role conflict on turnover intentions is weaker when psychological capital is high than when psychological capital is low. | Turnover Intentions                   | Not supported    |
| 4b                | The effect of role conflict on job performance depends on the level of psychological capital, such that the effect of role conflict on job performance is weaker when psychological capital is high than when psychological capital is low.                         | Self-report Job Performance           | Supported        |
|                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Managerially-Assessed Job Performance | Not supported    |

## **Appendix A: Survey Items by Variable**

### **Middle Manager Activity:**

1. Justify and define new programs
2. Evaluate the merits of new proposals
3. Search for new opportunities
4. Propose programs of projects to higher level managers
5. Encourage informal discussion and information sharing
6. Relax regulations to get new projects started
7. “Buy time” for experimental programs
8. Locate and provide resources for trial projects
9. Provide a safe haven for experimental programs
10. Gather information on the feasibility of new programs
11. Communicate the activities of competitors, suppliers, etc.
12. Assess changes in the external environment
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:**

1. I have to do things that should be done differently under different conditions.
2. I receive an assignment without the manpower to complete it.
3. I have to buck a rule or policy in order to carry out an assignment.
4. I work with two or more groups who operate quite differently.
5. I receive incompatible requests from two or more people.
6. I do things that are apt to be accepted by one person and not by others.
7. I receive an assignment without adequate resources and materials to execute it.
8. I work on unnecessary things.

### **Psychological Capital:**

1. I feel confident analyzing a long-term problem to find a solution.
2. I feel confident in representing my work area in meetings with management.
3. I feel confident contributing to discussions about the company’s strategy.
4. I feel confident helping to set targets/goals in my work area.
5. I feel confident contacting people outside the company (e.g., suppliers, customers) to discuss problems.
6. I feel confident presenting information to a group of colleagues.
7. If I should find myself in a jam at work, I could think of many ways to get out of it.
8. At the present time, I am energetically pursuing my work goals.
9. There are lots of ways around any problem.
10. Right now I see myself as being pretty successful at work.
11. I can think of many ways to reach my current work goals.

12. At this time, I am meeting the work goals that I have set for myself.
13. When I have a setback at work, I have trouble recovering from it, moving in. (R)
14. I usually manage difficulties one way or another at work.
15. I can be “on my own,” so to speak, at work if I have to.
16. I usually take stressful things at work in stride.
17. I can get through difficult times at work because I’ve experienced difficulty before.
18. I feel I can handle many things at a time at this job.
19. When things are uncertain for me at work, I usually expect the best.
20. If something can go wrong for me work-wise, it will. (R)
21. I always look on the bright side of things regarding my job.
22. I’m optimistic about what will happen to me in the future as it pertains to work.
23. In this job, things never work out the way I want them to. (R)
24. I approach this job as if “every cloud has a silver lining.”

**Job Performance:**

1. Adequately completes assigned duties.
2. Fulfills responsibilities specified in job description.
3. Performs tasks that are expected of him/her.
4. Meets formal performance requirements of the job.
5. Engages in activities that will directly affect his/her performance evaluation.
6. Neglects aspects of the job he/she is obligated to perform. (R)

**Turnover Intentions:**

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.

## **Vita**

Laura Madden is from Orinda, California and graduated from Norfolk Academy in Norfolk, Virginia in 1998. She graduated from Virginia Tech with a Bachelors of Arts degree in English in 2002 and from James Madison University with a Masters of Arts degree in English in 2004. She was part of the second cohort of the Organizations and Strategy PhD Program at the University of Tennessee in 2009. During her time at the University of Tennessee, her research was published in the *Academy of Management Review* and presented at the annual meetings of the Academy of Management, the Southern Management Association, and the Midwest Academy of Management. The University of Tennessee conferred her Doctor of Philosophy degree in the spring of 2013 and she began her academic career as an Assistant Professor of Management at East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina in the fall of 2013.