

## ROLE TAKING AND ROLE MAKING AMONG FEMALE RED CROSS WORKERS IN VIET NAM

Cherylon Robinson and Juanita M. Firestone  
The University of Texas at San Antonio

### ABSTRACT

This research analyzes responses from in-depth interviews with twenty women who worked for the Red Cross in Viet Nam. Narratives demonstrate role conflict resulting from conflictive expectations for behavior within their role set and between role expectations and identity. A new source of role conflict is identified involving conflict between role and environment. Analysis of responses to role conflict revealed role taking and role making. Variation in these responses was associated with amount and source of conflict, with age while in Viet Nam and with their motivation for going to Viet Nam.

### INTRODUCTION

Accounts of individuals who work in non-traditional gender settings can inform us of social role behavior that results when expectations are ambiguous, conflictive, or in transition (Silver 1996). This paper builds on previous literature by examining the behavior of women expected to enact a traditionally nurturing, female occupational role in a dangerous, male dominated environment. Specifically, we analyze the retrospective accounts of women who worked for the American National Red Cross in Viet Nam between 1965 and 1972.

All interviews were completed in 1992 meaning that the incidents respondents were recalling occurred between 20 – 27 years earlier. On the one hand we acknowledge that these women's accounts may have been "reconstructed" over the years. On the other hand, while some qualitative researchers argue that the researcher must remain skeptical and constantly worry about deception, others suggest that a "believed" interviewee is more likely to trust the interviewer and relate the "truth" (Abel 1987; Andersen 1987; Reinhartz 1992). Furthermore, one of the authors served as a Red Cross worker in South Korea, the insights from her experience provided a basis for assessing the veracity of the women's commentaries. In addition some life events are so salient that memories remain intact over long periods of time. Experiences occurring during wartime seem to fit this category. Finally our study was exploratory in nature and designed to provide a rich, detailed account of the nature of these women's experiences.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to role conflict emanating from conflicting expectations and a self/role misfit, their experiences reflect a previously unexplored source of role conflict, a misfit be-

tween formal role expectations and the realities of the work environment. Polarized behavioral expectations according to sex have resulted in certain settings being defined as typically male or typically female, depending on the characteristics and behaviors perceived as appropriate for that setting. Many of these social settings such as fraternities and sororities, are relatively sex segregated. Segregation based on sex is still prevalent and was the norm during the Viet Nam conflict. When enactment of work roles requires that individuals perform traditional gender-typed behaviors in settings typically associated with the opposite sex, the potential for role conflict is heightened (Zurcher 1983). Role conflict arises from the incongruity between gender-based expectations and the behaviors required by the environment. The focus of this paper is role conflict among female Red Cross workers in a traditionally male setting, war, and their responses to the resulting strain. We conclude with a discussion of the implications of our study for individuals whose paid work expectations conflict with the realities of their workplace.

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The symbolic interactionist perspective on role behavior as originally presented by Mead (1934) and refined by Blumer (1969), Goffman (1961a, 1961b), Turner (1962, 1968, 1978, 1979-1980, 1985, 1990), and Zurcher (1983), views roles as arising from social interaction and the interpretive process used by individuals. Within this framework, individuals do not just perform roles, but actively adjust them as necessary. Thus if individuals are in situations or organizations where behavioral expectations are ambiguous or conflicting, they may engage in altering or otherwise establishing a workable role.

For example, Zimmer (1986, 1987) distinguished between three different responses of women prison guards to employment in a male occupation. First were those who chose the "institutional role" in an attempt to follow male expectations and insulate themselves from male criticism (Zimmer 1986 110). Second were women who adopted a "modified role" by attempting to limit direct contact with prisoners and rely on male coworkers for support (Zimmer 1986 110-11). Last were women who engaged in "inventive roles" who used stereotypically female defined traits (intuition, superior communication skills) to win the respect of prisoners (Zimmer 1986 111). It appears that gender-based identities and concomitant role behaviors may be both flexible and context related (Moore 1999).

Kanter's examination of role behaviors among token female executives at "Indsco" revealed a variety of responses to performance pressures and boundary heightening experienced in different workplace contexts. She illustrated how a shift in proportions of men and women in a work group influenced the working experience of members, and how women made adjustments to their work role based on their working environment (Kanter 1977: 212). In particular women in groups with a preponderance of men ("tokens") respond to heightened performance pressures by altering their roles to fit their experiences (Kanter 1977: 222; Yoder & Aniakudo 1997). Supporting Kanter's work, Ely (1995) found that women in male-dominated firms chose a variety of ways of enacting roles to resist persistent devaluation of women. Some became accommodators emphasizing stereotypical gender role traits, while others rejected traditional roles, attempting to redefine their roles in a more positive light (Ely 1995).

The experiences of women employed in bureaucratic settings dominated by men fits Goffman's framework (1961a) in which he discriminated between disruptive and contained secondary adjustments to work in formal organizations. The former disrupt the operation of the organization by producing organizational change. The latter can result in the smoother operation of the organization through a better "fit" between the individual and the organization's structure. Goffman noted that secondary adjustments vary by position within the hierarchy of the organization. Those individuals at the bottom have

less attachment and commitment to the organization and will engage in a greater number of secondary adjustments. "They have jobs not careers" (Goffman 1961a 201; Ely 1995).

Enactment of roles within ambiguous situations frequently results in role strain. Goode (1960 493) proposed that role strain, "the difficulty of fulfilling role demands," was normal and arose from conflict between or within roles. Role conflict can result from friction associated with two different roles that occur simultaneously, or from conflicting expectations from one particular role. Turner (1990) further conceptualized role conflict as a misfit between expected behaviors and identity. We extend Goode's and Turner's conceptualization of role conflict to include situations in which there is a misfit between role demands and the expectations associated with the setting in which the role is played (see also Spradley & Mann 1975; Kanter 1977; Zurcher 1983; Zimmer 1986; Ely 1995; and Katila & Merilainen 1999). In this situation, role performance is often problematic because expectations for behavior are incongruous or inappropriate to the setting. While there are potential similarities between men and women's experiences in a war setting, women faced unique conflicts by working in a male environment.<sup>2</sup>

As individuals experience role conflict, they will attempt to negotiate their roles to alleviate the strain through a variety of behaviors. Turner (1956, 1962) initially distinguished between role making and role taking. Role taking involves "choosing the institutional role" and meeting the performance expectations of others (Turner 1956, 1962; Kanter 1977 110). On the other hand, role making involves modifying or recreating role expectations to be more consistent with the prevailing social context (Turner 1956, 1962; Kanter 1977; Ely 1995; Moore 1999). Zurcher (1983) further distinguished between attempts to change expectations for existing roles and attempts to create a new role. Another strategy, role distancing, was introduced by Goffman (1961b). If attempts to satisfactorily negotiate roles fail, individuals may simply exit particular roles, physically distancing themselves from the setting (Goode 1960).

Studies that examined role behavior in nontraditional settings describe a variety of responses to role conflict. Spradley and Mann

(1975) examined cocktail waitresses in a bar where patrons were typically male. Conflict between the men and women was diffused through joking. Zurcher's (1983) examination of male "hashers" in a sorority house found that the hashers attempted to alleviate conflict by creating new roles and by role distancing. Zimmer's (1986) study found three adaptations among female prison guards working in a male prison: institutional, modified and inventive roles. Kanter's (1977 230) examination of workers at "Indsco" highlighted how "tokens" engaged in role encapsulation, in which stereotypical gender role assumptions forced women into playing limited and caricatured roles as they became assimilated in the organization. As Zimmer (1987) noted, some of the female prison guards in her study adapted their work roles to include stereotypical feminine traits, and their adaptations proved highly successful. Recent research on women working in male dominated law firms adopted masculine-typed aggressiveness and instrumentality, while others attempted to modify the typical role by attributing success to feminine rather than masculine qualities (Ely 1995).

Clearly both work and gender role behaviors are learned and adapted to new and different environmental and social contexts. We build on this earlier research by examining responses to role conflict among women cast in a nurturing, traditionally female organizational role played out in a dangerous, male-defined environment, war.

#### **METHODOLOGY**

The respondents included nineteen white women and one Black woman identified by snowball sampling. One of the authors had served in the Red Cross in Korea and called the local chapter and asked for the name and phone number of a member who had served in Viet Nam. The initial informant then identified someone she knew as did all subsequent respondents.<sup>3</sup> None of the respondents refused to be interviewed. Indeed the women seemed eager to talk about their experiences, perhaps in part because this was the first time they had been asked to talk about their experiences formally.

The ages of the interviewees while in Viet Nam varied from twenty-two to forty-nine with a median age of twenty-five. They were of middle class background, and all but one completed college before joining the Red

Cross. The one exception was employed as a secretary during her tour in Viet Nam. With the exception of one divorcee, all others had never been married prior to serving. The majority of our respondents (twelve) were employed in the Supplemental Recreation Activities Overseas (SRAO) program; six were employed in Service to Military Hospitals (SMH); and two in Service to Military Installations (SMI).<sup>4</sup> Two of the women served two tours in Viet Nam.

Open-ended interview schedules allowed respondents to expound freely on their roles in Viet Nam. Interviews were completed in person or on the phone. Topics discussed included official and unofficial duties, relationships with the men and with other women stationed in Viet Nam, and positive and negative aspects of their experiences. All interviews were taped and transcribed. These transcripts were analyzed for patterns of role behavior. Since accounts of the Viet Nam conflict necessitate retrospective accounts of behavior, the fallibility of individual memory may clearly be a limitation in our study. However, because extraordinary events are more likely remembered than ordinary, and because Viet Nam was such an extraordinary experience, it could be less of a problem in this case. We also included a number of prompts specifically intended to elicit remembrances of the ordinary, such as "Describe a typical day."

#### **LEARNING THE ROLE**

Socialization for Red Cross workers involved training in organizational structure, rules, as well as skills for job performance. Formal training varied by program.<sup>5</sup> Women in the SMI and SMH programs were sent to Viet Nam after having been employed in the programs stateside. Upon employment, they were required to sign a mobility statement agreeing to be transferred wherever the Red Cross needed them. Thus, once assigned to Viet Nam, they were required to go or risk losing their job. Socialization into their work role occurred in the United States at their first duty station. They received further orientation upon arrival in Viet Nam. Once in Viet Nam, they could not exit for one year unless they quit their jobs, or were fired.

Women employed in the SRAO program were typically recruited directly out of college, specifically for employment in Viet Nam or South Korea, and were thus in Viet Nam vol-

untarily. They spent two weeks in training at the national headquarters of the Red Cross. Instruction in military ranks and protocol was often their first introduction to military life. Many of the Red Cross rules were created to assure workers followed military protocol and regulations. Workers who recently returned from Viet Nam performed a sample recreational program for trainees. Afterward, interaction with these women was part of the informal socialization process. The new recruits participated in workshops to develop skills in creating and executing recreational programs. After arriving in Viet Nam, they were given a short orientation and assigned to their units where socialization specific to their unit occurred.

The three Red Cross programs in Viet Nam were structured differently. In the SMI and SMH programs, supervisors and workers worked in the same field location. A Field Director or a Hospital Field Director headed each unit and was responsible for the conduct of the workers. Supervisors for the SRAO program were located in Saigon. Each unit had a director and a program director who were chosen by the supervisors in Saigon from among the women in their units. The unit directors were responsible for the conduct of the other Red Cross workers. The remoteness of their duty stations resulted in very little direct supervision by supervisors stationed in Saigon.

In all programs, the work role itself was distinctly female. Both official and unofficial expectations required stereotypical feminine behavior. The women described official role expectations such as talking, listening, and smiling as means of providing emotional support and unofficial duties such as serving as female symbols (all American girl, mother, and sister). Both contrasted sharply with the distinctly male environment of war. As one respondent noted:

You had to be tough—hardened in some ways and yet be soft. There was a fine line —You had to be hard, and you had to be soft.

All of the women who remarked about their preparation for Viet Nam stressed its inadequacy for preparing them for the situations they encountered. This inadequacy is evidenced by the following statements:

I don't think they gave you any [training]. When I went to Korea I spent two weeks in Washington. When I went to Viet Nam, I only had to spend one [week]...maybe they were naive.

[I think had I received better preparation they] would have been a lot more honest about the downside of it rather than pretending that everything was "la la land" and, if you had a problem, you were the odd one out.

### **ROLE CONFLICT AMONG RED CROSS WOMEN IN VIET NAM**

Coping with role conflict was a constant part of the interviewee's experiences as Red Cross workers in Viet Nam. All women interviewed reported some role conflict. A higher level of role conflict was experienced by SRAO personnel resulting from both role/environment conflict and conflict within the role. Individuals employed in SMI and SMH expressed less role conflict resulting predominantly from role/environment conflict. They experienced little to no conflict within their role.

The women frequently perceived the Red Cross "mission" as conflicting with the realities of their job, and with their own changing expectations for gender roles. Official duties were defined by the "mission" of the Red Cross in Viet Nam: to increase group morale by providing casework and recreation services to military personnel. One respondent's comment is illustrative:

You upheld the wonderful reputation of the Red Cross no matter what, while they were giving you shit. It made me angry that they were more concerned with us having a drink in uniform than getting shot in uniform.

Workers were considered official Red Cross representatives even when off duty. Turner's (1978) concept of role-person merger seems to capture the expectations that the Red Cross workers adhere to strict guidelines even when off duty. For example, dating married men, taking unauthorized rides, and drinking in uniform were all prohibited. However, difficulties in enforcement of the rules especially in SRAO units depended on commitment to the role and adoption of the role into their identity. Thus, the Red Cross depended on an internalization of norms for strict role performance.

However, difficulties in enforcement

meant the expectations for unofficial duties were often ambiguous and open to differing interpretations. Differing perceptions about the value of Red Cross work was evident in interactions with nurses, with enlisted soldiers, and with officers. Statements made by the women in our sample suggested that these inconsistencies created a misfit between identity and role expectations that was reinforced by the friction between the expectations that they perform traditional roles in a setting that often demanded non-traditional behaviors.

### **Intra-Role Conflict**

Zurcher (1983) distinguished between conflict caused by the differing expectations for two different roles (inter-role conflict) and conflicts between expectations of others and the expectation of self for that role (intra-role conflict). The experiences of our respondents provide interesting examples of intra-role conflict. Unofficial duties included attending formal military functions and parties with officers. Their value at these functions was to serve as symbols, such as a sex object, not as individuals. As one woman commented:

It used to irritate me that the Colonel would call and say 'I'd like two girls to come for dinner'—like we were some kind of decoration...I didn't like to be treated like that.

Attending the dinner could lead to being defined as a "good girl" or a "bad girl" based on the perspectives of those at the dinner. If objectified as a "bad girl," resulting sexual propositions could lead to conflict with definition of self as a "good girl."

Role conflict also emerged from being caught in the middle of conflict between soldiers. This was exacerbated by status distinctions between enlisted personnel and officers.

A few times somebody said 'you Red Cross girls only pay attention to the officers.' But I really tried when I was on duty...[not to] pay particular attention to the officers... There were occasionally enlisted personnel who thought you were there to date the officers, and there were a few officers who thought you were there for the sex.

Interactions with other women were often particularly problematic for women employed

in SRAO. The distinctly feminine nature of their work role was perceived by other women, especially nurses, as "fluff" and not as important compared to their more onerous work.

...the nurses looked down on the rest of us ...they felt like we were not professional, and I resented that...like our being there wasn't as valid.

Conflict also occurred when SMI and SMH workers were compared to SRAO workers. A worker in the SMH program notes:

It was really important to us at the hospital not to be known as donut dollies. But to the military a Red Cross person was a Red Cross person so obviously you must be a donut dollie.

Faced with conflicting expectations, these women felt they lacked unambiguous guidelines when cases were not clear cut regarding official duties.

This guy was bearing his soul to me...telling me his friends had been killed...he was going AWOL, and I didn't know how to handle that kind of thing. We were never given guidance for that sort of thing.

The lack of guidelines could specifically result in conflict between supervisors and workers. The following comment was made by a woman confronted by her supervisor over helping the nurses with their work.

I came head to head with my Field Director because she was one of those people who felt like our job there was to do the Red Cross thing and that was all [of] our job. I didn't feel that way.

### **Role/Environment Conflict**

Both official and unofficial expectations reflected traditional gender role expectations, yet were carried out in a nontraditional gender setting. Official expectations included providing recreation and food as a means of offsetting the stresses of battle. Unofficial expectations, such as serving as female symbols, arose from the war setting itself and extended into off duty hours. Work was a twenty-four hour job in which respondents were never off duty, and they found it difficult

to distance themselves from its expectations. Statements such as "There was no privacy in Viet Nam," and "I remember days when my face hurt from smiling all day long" reflect their experience.

Furthermore, they could not easily get away from their duties by living away from the military compound or interacting socially with individuals not part of the war.

Even with those who had sexual relationships, there was very little privacy...Everybody shared quarters...There wasn't any soundproofing. It just wasn't a situation nor was there any expectation that there would be privacy. There wasn't anyplace else to go.

The nontraditional environment of the war zone often created the circumstances that led to role conflict. They were in a man's world in which profanity and vulgar jokes were common.

The guys in most cases didn't clean up their language. You had to respect where they were and what they were doing. We were visitors on their turf...They loved shocking you. That made their day when they shocked a "donut dolly."

The nontraditional environment resulted in women being placed in situations in which they would not normally find themselves. SRAO personnel who were sent to firebases sometimes encountered men urinating or showering in the open.

You had to realize that you were in a man's world and they couldn't change it even if they wanted to accommodate females. There weren't facilities. So when you were walking on bases, [some] guys purposely waited until you were there to take their showers...At first it was very shocking...but after a while you just walked around with blinders on. You'd yell and scream and say "Hi" even if they were in the shower or in a john [which] didn't have a door. So [you would] see them sitting there doing their thing...conversing with you as you walk by...

Clearly these experiences conflicted with expectations surrounding gender roles of the time.

Another major source of conflict involved

the perception by some men that Red Cross women had "loose" morals or were prostitutes.<sup>6</sup> Such beliefs conflicted with the women's identity as patriots with a mission to raise troop morale. The focus on prostitutes seemed especially prevalent during the 1970's.

The respect level was different [during my second tour of Viet Nam]. I was propositioned considerably more. I defended the Red Cross more...[against things like] 'Well, I know you didn't wear underwear' and 'We paid \$15 [for sex with the Red Cross girls].' Bull shit! I knew that wasn't true.

The nature of the environment also resulted in women experiencing environment specific hardships. Heat, insects, lack of supplies and amenities, and, perhaps most problematic for women in a male environment, the lack of sex segregated toilets.

There weren't a lot of field facilities for women. You thought twice about what you ate or drank before you went someplace. The toilet facilities [were] out in the field or on the side of the road typically...

Being a female in a war zone also did not exempt women from the dangers of war. Sixteen women reported experiencing fear at some point in Viet Nam. One woman reported:

I was there during the Tet Offensive and that was scary because you didn't really know what was going on. We lived in Bien Hoa, and they evacuated all the Viet Namese women...Every night before I went to bed I set out my loafers. I wanted to know exactly where they were in case we got rocketed at night...Also I was always sleeping in my [day] clothes because if anything happened I wanted to be dressed.

The SRAO personnel sent to firebases could find themselves in particularly dangerous circumstances:

[During] the Que San offensive...I pushed for clearance to go out and it took two weeks...We took off and got there [the firebase] and fog came in. We couldn't get back and had to spend the night. Then, it was the terror...I remember Que San very vividly be-

cause of all the battles that had been going on and all the incoming fire. Seeing helicopters down, burned out, guys swimming naked in the water and mud...We spent the night in a Red Cross ambulance. I couldn't sleep. I remember listening to the battle take place...I remember flying home following the river and knowing where the battle had taken place and thinking we'd be shot down ...I knew I was going to die that night.

Women were not only afraid of being injured by the fighting, a few women reported being fearful of the soldiers they were sent to serve. Their fears were realistic as three Red Cross women were murdered while in Viet Nam, and others were raped.<sup>7</sup>

Interestingly, the war itself rather than the danger was viewed as especially problematic. When asked "What was the most negative aspect of your experience in Viet Nam," eight women made a global statement regarding the "senselessness" or "obscenity" of the war and about the "suffering" they witnessed. As one respondent noted:

It never made sense to me, politically or otherwise...There was no need for anyone to be dying.

Decreased sensitivity to the suffering produced guilt:

I remember the upside down rifles with helmets on them...I remember seeing Viet Namese POWs and body bags on the helicopter flying back. I remember putting my feet on a body bag and later on realizing what I had done. I was so ashamed.

The lack of congruity between their roles and actual experience of war was expressed by some women as guilt related to having fun in the middle of so much tragedy.

Yes, it was a horrible place to be, and there were a lot of horrible atrocities...still to this day I am a little uncomfortable with the fact that I was there [and] that I did have a good time. It embarrasses me. I had a great time while so many were killed.

Others made more specific comments on the drugs, the hardships of the situation, and on the deaths of specific men. Others responded that the environment left them feel-

ing helpless. One respondent noted:

I think the most negative thing in retrospect was the sense of helplessness. That no matter what you did it wasn't going to change the war. These guys were still going to get killed. You could do the best you could but you couldn't make it all better.

### RESPONSES TO ROLE CONFLICT

Neither multiple roles nor role expectations by themselves guarantee role conflict will occur. Differences in individual values, needs, in their sense of the value and meaning of their roles, in the types of support systems available and coping strategies may all impact responses to multiple role expectations.

#### Role Taking: Conformity

As discussed earlier, role taking includes accepting the role expectations as defined by others and performing in a manner consistent with those expectations (Turner 1956, 1962). The overwhelming response of our respondents to role conflict in this setting was role taking. All of the women interviewed demonstrated some degree of conformity to their roles. In part this was due to the importance they attached to their experiences in Viet Nam:

I think by and large most of the girls did their part...most of the girls were pretty much following the program, the guidelines...to project a certain image and help the guys get through this time of their lives.

References to their sense of "mission," their willingness to repeat the experience, and statements declaring their role as the highlight of their life punctuated our interviews.

I do think that the few of us that were in this profession really did make an impact on people's lives and that's probably why I'm so proud of being there. Outside of the fact that it made an impact on my personal life, I do think there was a reason for me to be there, and I do think I helped people.

Role conformity was sometimes displayed as strict adherence to the rules. Thus conformity was most likely when role expectations were consistent with identity. A respondent who was assigned to a hospital

ship stated:

I was a rule follower...I found that the military always accepted us as one of them. I do think that whether or not you accepted their rules had a bearing on that...I found that if I cooperated and worked with them as professionals then they cooperated and worked with me. I never had a major problem. I'm the type of person that doesn't like conflict, and I bend over backwards to keep things smooth.

Sometimes conformity involved enduring the situation rather than truly accepting it when expectations were inconsistent with identity:

[My boyfriend] and I had planned to go to Hong Kong together till [headquarters] heard about it. They sent out a notice that Red Cross women were not supposed to go on leave with men...So I didn't go. I felt I had an obligation to the uniform.

Instances that would today be described as sexual harassment were tolerated as part of role expectations. Often the women literally "grinned and bore it" demonstrating their extreme adherence to the rules:

I had to let "double entendres" go over my head...they always had to show us about "scout dogs" and how a WAC makes franks, getting out the dog...So we pretended naive sometimes.

Another respondent explained that:

You had to be very careful not to insult any GI. If somebody propositioned you, you were supposed to turn them down in a nice way instead of [saying] "buzz off, you creep." There were days you just wanted to look at somebody and say "take a hike" or "blow off." You just couldn't do that.

#### **Role Taking: Distancing**

Role distancing implies a separation of the person from the role where the individual may be denying "...not the role but the virtual self that is implied in the role..." (Goffman 1961b 108). Some women recognized the importance of emotional distancing from the setting, and from their role:

As I think back on it, you had to go in and

see these patients with half their body blown away and you couldn't let it affect you. Now, I can't watch a movie about Viet Nam or any kind of violence or blood. So, subconsciously that must have had an effect. While I was there, you couldn't let it affect you.

Distancing from the work role and in particular from Red Cross "lifers" was also manifest through the use of joking:

They used to call me 'Hannah Heritage' because my mother had been with the Red Cross in World War II. They'd joke that I'd be a lifer.

Humor allowed these women to tolerate negative aspects of their job by distancing themselves from the war.

We had a Department of Defense Geneva Convention card, and we always laughed and said we hoped we were captured by someone who could read English.

#### **Role Making: Altering Existing Roles**

Role making typically involves modifying or altering existing role expectations to create new ones more consistent with personal preferences/inclinations for that role (Turner 1956, 1962). It may be that in circumstances where they have the power to do so, individuals learn to alter role expectations to enable them to fit the unique context of their experiences (Zimmer 1986, 1987; Ely 1995; Moore 1999). There were accounts by nineteen women we interviewed of attempts to change role requirements, most often by breaking rules.

I never got drunk in uniform but I remember one time we went to some firebase and it was so hot and we were so thirsty and the only thing they had to drink was beer. What were you supposed to do?...They didn't have any potable water. You either drank a beer or you didn't drink.

While using alcohol on duty was rare, many women seemed more relaxed about drinking and drug use than was typical of women who remained in the U.S. during the 1960s. This respondent's comments are illustrative:



We drank. We did drugs...trying to push the limits a little bit.

Rule breaking was even condoned by some supervisors whose job was to insure conformity to the rules.

We had places where we were not [supposed] to go. In Viet Nam we were to take no recreational rides...I remember I drove a jeep and was stupid enough to drive it in front of our unit director...I also took an (unauthorized) ride and missed the flight back. That was the day I thought I was going [to be sent] home...[instead] the unit director made it clear to me she thought these were good experiences but she didn't want to know about it. [She explained that] it was okay but don't "put me in a position to have to send you home."

The environment in which they lived and worked led to suspension of stereotypical gender role behaviors. Humor was a tool for altering traditional gender norms:

We were playing this game, the five senses ...For the sense of touch, the guys would put their hands behind their back and we'd put stuff in their hands and they'd have to guess what it was without seeing it...I gave [name deleted] a plastic bag [with a condom in it] and she stuck it in this guy's hand. Well the guy turned beet red because that many years ago you didn't say the word rubber...It was hilarious.

The setting also created circumstances where well established roles, such as that of friend, were altered. Descriptions of friendships reflected an intensity seldom experienced in a non-war setting and is evidenced by continued commitment to and maintenance of friendships created over twenty years ago. The respondents suggested that these friendships closely resembled sisterhood.

Your family wasn't there and was not readily accessible by phone or letter. So holidays you spent with your friends, good times and bad times were spent with your friends. [Friendships] were much more intense and lasting.

Often rule breaking involved ignoring regu-

lations about dating and/or having sexual relationships. At times women actively altered such roles as girlfriends. One respondent remarked:

I lost my virginity in Viet Nam and it was like you had to do it. When you're in a life and death situation, sex is very important. It was something I had to experience—so I did—a brief encounter with a married man. I was breaking all the rules.

Dating married men was strictly prohibited, but marital status was frequently hidden by the men or ignored by the women:

...that was a unique time in everyone's life, and there were no rules and regulations over there...Truthfully, once you got over there, there were a lot of rules for a lot of things that we didn't pay any attention to ...You didn't know what was going to happen tomorrow, and people just lived for the day...I'd had no experience with married men prior to going to Viet Nam. They were taboo. Then you got over there, and it just didn't seem to be as important.

### **Role Making: Creating New Roles**

While role making may involve modifying existing role expectations, it is also the case that different environmental contexts may produce the need to invent new role behaviors. Note how some of the women prison guards in Zimmer's works (1986, 1987) invented feminine style interactions to enable them to perform their duties. Self initiated roles, such as scavenger, spectator, and mourner, were created to fit the environment and reduce conflict. The role of scavenger was created to meet needs resulting from shortages and hardships. One woman talked about:

...just trying to overcome the situation. Procurement was a problem...there was a lot of time spent trying to figure out the physical obstacles that were in the way...Everybody against the situation. Each day was a challenge.

Prized items included refrigerators, air conditioners, and privacy. Red Cross recreationists often appropriated items intended for other purposes in their recreation programs, such as paint, food and transportation.

Although mourning was not officially part

of the job description, women found themselves mourning individuals as well as the situation:

The death of one of our dust off pilots...was hard because he was part of our group of friends...I remember one guy who kept sliding down in his bed, and I couldn't figure out why. Then it dawned on me there wasn't anything below his hip. That was awful for me. I also would touch people on their hand or arm as part of nurturing, or hold their hand, and we had patients burned so badly you couldn't touch them anywhere. The burn patients were probably the hardest for me because a lot of them were burned on 75-90% of their body...The whole experience aged all of us.

Conflict between role and setting sometimes resulted in the women feeling more like spectators than participants in the war:

Sometimes we felt like we were superfluous, and I would get concerned about being in the middle of a tragedy. How could we possibly have the luxury of being able to spectate and of being safe while the men had to risk their lives. We could only go so far, we couldn't participate.

Sometimes new roles were imposed on the women by others. Women reported at times feeling that they acted as scapegoats for the conflicts experienced by the men. Red Cross women were victims of robbery, sexual assault and murder. Murder victims included a woman shot by an ex-boyfriend, and another who was stabbed to death by an unknown assailant.<sup>8</sup> Victimization of other Red Cross personnel increased our respondent's sense of vulnerability, as illustrated by this comment:

I still have a copy of what was posted all over the post, the wanted sign...She was stabbed, had been in country two weeks...it was [lack of] security again...[he] broke into her hooch...[It was difficult] to reopen the unit...I didn't trust [the security] that whole assignment. Her room was still [kept] locked up...I locked my door for the first time.

None of the women we interviewed was raped although they had friends who were:

...my friend (was) raped...he broke into the barracks...came into her room...raped her, saw something with her name on it which was his family name and became very upset. She faked a fit and he took her to the first aid station. He ended up reduced in rank and (got) six months.

Imposition of these roles on Red Cross women put them in the position of enacting undesirable roles.

## DISCUSSION

The Red Cross organization required a commitment to their work role that was extreme in comparison to typical paid work expectations for women. These standards included rules for conduct even when not actively engaged in the work role. Rules emphasized that employees represented the Red Cross whether on or off duty. The result was a twenty-four hour duty day.

Socialization of Red Cross employees into their work role often resulted in "role-person merger" in which the attitudes and behaviors expected in their work role carried over into non-work situations (Turner 1978). This resulted in the dominance of their work role as a source of identity and self esteem. Thus, professional ethics were absorbed into the self and defined personal expectations. A strong role person merger meant an attack on any Red Cross worker represented an attack on them all.

The experience of enacting a twenty-four hour day produced considerable role conflict; however, we found variation in the amount and source of the role conflict. Role conflict was most likely to come from the conflict between their traditional role expectations and the nontraditional setting in which they enacted their role. Individuals employed in the SRAO program experienced on the whole more role conflict than women employed in SMI or SMH. We partially attribute the amount of role conflict among SRAO personnel to the fact that as "donut dollies" they spent a great deal of the time on firebases where the incongruity between their role and the setting was the highest. This incongruity was apparent in statements related to living and working in a man's world. SRAO personnel were also more likely to experience conflict within their role than SMI or SMH personnel. They were more likely to be treated as sex objects, to have their jobs viewed as

fluff, and to find themselves in situations for which there were no guidelines for job performance or for which guidelines were inadequate.

Two women were exceptions to the tendency for SMI and SMH to report less role conflict. The second and third highest accounts of role conflict came from women employed as Hospital Field Directors for the entire tour of duty.<sup>9</sup> As Hospital Field Directors, they were responsible for the maintenance of the Red Cross program in their hospital as well as for the other Red Cross personnel. Hospital Field Directors lived and worked with their units. We suspect that the structure of the program and the nature of their supervisor roles accounts for the amount of role conflict experienced by these two women. Supervisors of the SRAO program were located in Saigon and as such were far removed from the day to day activities of those units. The only SRAO program supervisor interviewed demonstrated the lowest level of role conflict.

All the women we interviewed demonstrated a high degree of commitment and conformity to their roles. Even in extreme situations of personal assault that today would be perceived as sexual harassment, these women responded to role conflict with the nice, polite behaviors expected by the Red Cross. The majority of women we interviewed engaged in role making when role expectations conflicted with identity or the situations in which they found themselves. Attempts at changing role expectations consisted mainly of breaking the rules in attempts to alter the role to fit the setting. Creation of roles outside official Red Cross expectations, such as spectators and mourners, also reflected role making in response to the setting.

Differences in degree of role person merger may account for changes of some of the women from traditional to more modern gender-based behaviors. These changes were especially noticeable in narratives related to sexual conduct. Some women adhered to Red Cross proscriptions against any sexual relations while others openly engaged in such relationships. Most of the latter agreed that their non-traditional behavior would not have occurred had they remained stateside.

The majority of the women reported a balance of role taking and role making behaviors. Imbalances involved more role taking than role making. The variances may be ex-

plained by a combination of age while serving in Viet Nam and motivations for going. Women who did not volunteer for Viet Nam, but were transferred as part of the normal job rotation were older and exhibited less role making behavior. Both women who were over forty during their tour in Viet Nam exhibited more role taking and less role making behavior. We expect that younger women whose motivations for accepting a job in Viet Nam were described as seeking "adventure," a desire for travel, or a belief that women as well as men should serve their country, were more likely to engage in role making perhaps reflecting personal identity or changing gender roles.

No one in our sample rejected their role through quitting, or breaking the rules blatantly enough to get sent home. However, they did report instances of such extreme role rejection by other women.

The women we interviewed could only leave their work environment by exiting their role as Red Cross workers. In other words, they could not leave their roles as Red Cross workers without leaving Viet Nam, nor could they leave Viet Nam before their tour of duty was completed without quitting or being fired. Thus, while engaging in role making and role taking, they continued to fulfill the primary expectations of the Red Cross albeit in innovative ways. This is similar to individuals who exist in "total institutions" (see Goffman 1961a) with an important difference. They were not confined by external controls such as legal or medical decisions. While they could go home, we propose the constraints experienced by the women we interviewed were internal. Leaving Viet Nam was not a viable alternative because it exemplified personal failure. Furthermore, departing could be viewed as abandoning those individuals unable to exit. These women did not want to let their friends, their family, the troops or the country down. Remaining in Viet Nam was necessary for the maintenance of their identity and self esteem. Thus, most of the women never considered going back to the mainland, in spite of the role conflict they encountered.

## CONCLUSIONS

Role making among our respondents can be viewed as secondary adjustments to organizational life. The behavior of most of the Red Cross women consisted of contained,

not disruptive, secondary adjustments. Even role making in the form of breaking the rules was often tolerated by supervisors, as long as the behavior did not threaten the reputation of the organization. Creating new roles, such as mourner and spectator, allowed the women to enact their work roles in a way that was more consistent with their experiences, but did not disrupt performance of their primary responsibilities. Furthermore, well established roles such as friend were adjusted to better fit their experiences. Thus, role making resulted in a better "fit" between their definition of self and the work context.

While hierarchical position within the Red Cross alone did not prove to be important, commitment to the organization did. As in most organizations, the longer the tenure, the stronger the commitment. Those women who did not consider themselves to be Red Cross "lifers" and who were in Viet Nam voluntarily were more likely to distance themselves from the Red Cross using secondary adjustments. These individuals were committed to Red Cross goals, but not attached in the form of long-term commitment. Individuals who conformed to work roles and only engaged in role taking tended to be "lifers" whose identity was compatible with that of the Red Cross work role. They were both committed and attached to the organization.

This study has implications for individual behaviors as social change influences both our gender expectations and the organizations in which we work. Recent attention to the topic of sexual harassment in the workplace reflects this intersection. Similarly, changes in the work environment as a result of new technology may alter expectations for work role performance. For example, societal expectations for nurses continue to include nurturance of patients and hands on treatment while the introduction of technology separates the nurse from contact with the patient. The realities of the job now reflect seemingly impersonal technical assistance rather than individual nurturance. Individuals who face the strain of such conflicting expectations and of incongruities between role and setting may engage in the innovative role making we observed in Red Cross workers. Work environments that are difficult or impossible to leave may intensify these efforts.

No matter how unpleasant or dangerous, Red Cross workers in Viet Nam could not go

home at the end of their duty day — they were home. This inability to leave the setting heightened their role conflict and the creative role making utilized to cope with the pressures of their environment.

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- special, difficult to locate population, to collect exploratory information (Babbie 2000: 180).
4. Women employed in SMI provided casework services to military personnel, predominantly the sending and receiving of messages related to medical conditions and emergency situations back home. Caseworkers employed in SMH delivered casework services to hospitalized service personnel and hospital personnel. SMH recreationists served refreshments and played games with patients or wrote letters dictated by patients who could not write. The duties of women employed in SRAO consisted of delivering recreation programs to service personnel on the firebases and in support units, and maintaining recreational facilities on their home base.
 

Women employed in SRAO were frequently termed "donut dollies," a term which originated during World War II. All women employed in these programs, with the exception of secretaries, were required to have a college degree.
  5. Informal training/socialization processes were not mentioned by the women in our sample. This illustrates one of the drawbacks associated with retrospective accounts.
  6. How prevalent this view was among the men is uncertain. Women who mentioned it as a source of role conflict did not think it was held by the majority of men; however being confronted by these beliefs caused problems for them.
  7. This information was mentioned by several of the interviewees.
  8. This information was mentioned by several of the interviewees.
  9. One woman who was promoted to Hospital Field Director while in Viet Nam experienced a lower level of role strain.

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### END NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> We also note that while we interpreted some of their experiences as "sexual harassment," none of the respondents did so suggesting that they are not "reinterpreting" their experiences based on current vocabulary.
- <sup>2</sup> Recognition of the validity of women's experience with role strain in Viet Nam does not assume that males in this setting did not experience role strain, or that their general responses were different from the women.
- <sup>3</sup> While this sampling technique produces a non-probability sample, snowball sampling is appropriate when researchers seek members of a



## SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CORRELATES OF BUSINESS ETHICS, FAMILY VALUES AND PERSONAL BELIEFS AMONG CHINESE ENTREPRENEURS

Li-chen Ma, Lamar University

### ABSTRACT

Based on an interview survey of 146 private business owners in a major city in China, this study investigated the owners' personal values, beliefs, business ethics, and the sociodemographic correlates of such beliefs, values and ethics. Although in most aspects they were not much different from their counterparts in other societies, the emerging Chinese business owners showed uniqueness and ambiguities in some of their values, beliefs, and ethics. They attributed little of their business success to Confucianism or any religious values. The relationship of religion to economy, as espoused by Weber and others, was inapplicable to the Chinese socialist system.

As the world's most populous country, China has achieved one of the fastest growing economies on earth in the past two decades. Since Deng's economic reforms in 1979, the Chinese economy was growing at an average annual rate of 9.8 percent until 1998 (Morrison 1999). Even during the Asian financial crisis of the years of 1998 and 1999, China's growth rate slowed but still maintained the rates 7.8 percent and 7.1 percent, respectively. In the year 2000, the growth rate rose to 8.0 percent (*Beijing Review* 2001). At the current rate of growth, which is estimated to be seven percent for the year of 2001 and projected to be at eight percent annually for the next five years, China's economy will be at year's end 10 times larger than it was in 1979 when the reform formally started. If the current and projected growth rates continue, China will become the world's largest economy - larger than America's in the next century (*U.S. News & World Report* 1995; Morrison 1999). There are several reasons for China's economic success. One of the reasons is the privatization of the economy.

Private enterprise existed before Mao's Communist regime in China. There were millions of private businesses and corporations in operation before and even during the Sino-Japanese War. After the Communist revolution in China in 1949, Chairman Mao started a drastic societal transformation, transforming Chinese society from a capitalist system into a communist system. Private businesses were confiscated by the government and private property system was abolished. During the late 1950s and early 1960s, while the Great Leap Forward was launched and communes were implemented, there was almost no private economy in China. It was only when the Great Leap For-

ward and commune system proved to be a disaster, that individual economy was allowed to develop on a very limited scale.

The light of private economy was turned on when Deng Xiaoping came into power. Deng took a pragmatic approach to modernizing China. He and his reformists in the Communist government approved individual economic enterprise in 1979. Individual farmers were allowed to sell surplus from their farm products, and some individuals were permitted to operate barber shops, food stands, family-type restaurants, and bicycle repair shops or other small stores. The national policy was made clear that China's economic growth would continue to be public ownership, with proper individual businesses as a supplement to the socialist economy. However, as the economic reform accelerated and expanded, many individual businesses felt the need to hire more workers; thus, in 1987 the Chinese government started to relax its policies and regulations on the employment of individuals in private business. Finally in 1988, it passed legislation and amended the constitution regarding the legal rights of private business throughout the country (*China Today* 1993). The passage of the new legislation opened up the door for private enterprise to spring up rapidly in China. The increase of the number of private businesses has been phenomenal (Yuan 1992; Zhang 1993; Han 1995). The private sector of the economy had been growing faster than any other sectors, and accounted for 13 percent of China's industrial output (Clifford, Robert, Bamathan & Engardio 1997). By 1998, it had grown to about 27 percent of the Gross Domestic Product (Gregory & Tenev 2001). In the present economy, while half of the state enter-