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## **‘That is my job’: How employees’ role orientation affects their job performance**

*Sharon K. Parker*

### **ABSTRACT**

Findings from two field studies support the proposition that the way individuals define their role, or their role orientation, is a powerful influence on their behaviour; resulting in more or less effective job performance. The first study showed that, within a relatively self-managing context, flexible role orientation predicted supervisory assessments of overall job performance, as well as a change in job performance. The second study showed flexible role orientation predicted job performance in high autonomy jobs but not low autonomy jobs. In both studies, role orientation predicted performance more strongly than other work attitudes, including job satisfaction, generalized self-efficacy, locus of control, and job aspiration. Collectively, the findings suggest that the development of a more flexible role orientation represents a relatively unexplored avenue for enhancing employee performance, particularly in self-managing contexts. As such, further research on the process of shaping and promoting employees’ role orientation is recommended.

### **KEYWORDS**

flexibility ■ job autonomy ■ job performance ■ perceived job breadth ■ role orientation ■ role perceptions

It has long been observed that employees can hold restrictive views about their roles; a phenomenon described as the ‘job myopia’ or ‘that’s not my job’ syndrome (Davis & Wacker, 1987). Such a narrow and passive role orientation is assumed to impair performance and inhibit receptivity to

change. Davis and Wacker (1987: 438) suggested that 'important needs go unmet because those who are first aware of problems shrug it off as not part of their job'. Klein (1976) similarly described how Tayloristic job designs restrict employees' role orientation to the point where they are not concerned with anything beyond their immediate job, such as wider changes in the firm or improvements that can be made. As Morrison (1994: 1563) asserted: 'an important management function may be to reduce the perception "that's not my job" with respect to activities that are critical but not formally enforced'. Theory also supports the importance of taking into account how people see their roles. For example, Porter and Lawler (1968) proposed that effective job performance is dependent on employees' possessing appropriate role perceptions. However, despite this long-standing proposition, there is relatively little evidence that how employees see their role, or their 'role orientation', affects their overall work performance. This is the central issue investigated in the current article. I elaborate on the specific hypotheses shortly. First, I describe the concept of role orientation.

### **Role orientation**

Even within the same job, employees will have different beliefs regarding what their role is about. One secretary might define his role in broad terms, believing he is responsible for activities ranging from answering the telephone to anticipating the needs of the international visitors to the department. Another secretary might define her job more narrowly, feeling responsibility for carrying out traditional tasks, such as word processing only. Anticipating the needs of international visitors would be seen as 'not my job'. These secretaries differ in their 'role orientation' (Parker et al., 1997: 904), or how they define their work role, including what types and breadth of tasks, goals, and problems they see as within their set of responsibilities, and how they believe they should approach those tasks, goals and problems to be effective. Alternative beliefs about the same role reflect the fact that work roles are socially constructed rather than purely objective. In Ilgen and Hollenbeck's (1991) terms, roles contain both 'established task elements' that are constructed by the organization as well as 'emergent task elements' that occur as a result of social factors, including the job-holder who can self-generate these elements. In Wrzesniewski and Dutton's (2001) terms, people change how they see their jobs (or engage in 'cognitive job crafting') to achieve meaning and identity in the work place, such as nurses seeing their work as being about total patient care, rather than seeing it solely as the delivery of high-quality technical care.

A distinguishing feature of the concept of role orientation (sometimes also referred to as role definition)<sup>1</sup> is that it concerns how an individual construes their work role, rather than their affective reactions to that role (Parker, 2000). The concept is thus more cognitive in its emphasis than variables such as job satisfaction and affective commitment. The concept of role orientation is nevertheless distinct from traits or dispositions, such as proactive personality (Bateman & Crant, 1993). The latter are considered to be relatively enduring aspects of individuals, whereas role orientation is a set of malleable beliefs that can change in response to change in the external environment or change within the person (Parker et al., 1997).

A concept closely related to role orientation, albeit narrower in focus, is perceived job breadth (Morisson, 1994; Tepper & Taylor, 2003), which refers to how many citizenship behaviours an individual defines as 'in-role'. Thus Morrison (1994) argued: 'the greater an individual's perceived job breadth, the more activities he or she defines as in-role' (p. 1544). Perceived job breadth can be seen as a dimension of role orientation; however, role orientation is a more encompassing concept. It refers not only to how narrowly or broadly an individual defines their job, but also their beliefs about how to best approach their tasks to be effective. For example, one might have a very passive orientation towards one's role, seeing good performance as executing tasks and responding effectively to problems and requests, whereas a more proactive view is one in which the individual sees good performance as anticipating problems, thinking ahead, and using one's initiative. Likewise, one might have a long-term and strategic orientation in which, for example, one sees it as part of one's role to anticipate future opportunities and threats; or one might have a collective role orientation in which they define their role in terms of working collaboratively with others to achieve goals. The particular dimension of role orientation of interest will depend on the context and the research question. The key suggestion here is that perceived job breadth is one dimension of role orientation, but there are other dimensions that can also be relevant.

The focus on 'role' in the concept of role orientation directs attention towards one's beliefs about the breadth and type of responsibilities one has in their role, rather than more general notions of work and careers. As such, role orientation is distinct from the general concept of 'work orientation' (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997), which is concerned with whether individuals see their work as a 'job' (with a focus on financial rewards), a 'career' (with a focus on advancement), or a 'calling' (with a focus on socially useful work). Role orientation is also more specific than the sociological concept of work orientation, which concerns whether individuals have an extrinsic or intrinsic perspective about work (Goldthorpe et al., 1968).

In summary, the concept of role orientation refers to how an individual defines their work role, such as how broadly they perceive their role; what types of tasks, goals, and problems they see as relevant to their role; and how they believe they should approach those tasks, goals and problems to be effective. Role orientation is a set of beliefs, and as such, is shaped by the environment, as well as by personality and individual differences. Different dimensions of role orientation can be identified. The focus in this study is on a flexible role orientation, as elaborated next.

### Flexible role orientation

In today's highly competitive world, flexibility is essential for survival. In the manufacturing context, for example, pressure to simultaneously achieve low cost, high quality, and fast delivery times has resulted in 'a paradigm shift in . . . culture and practice' (Webster, 1993: 53). This paradigm shift, variously referred to as 'agile manufacturing', 'new wave manufacturing', 'integrated manufacturing', and 'flexible manufacturing' (see Parker & Wall, 1998), involves a move away from mass production principles to the use of multiple flexible technologies and work practices. For example, the combined implementation of Advanced Manufacturing Technology, cellular manufacturing, just-in-time production and total quality management allows organizations to integrate traditionally separate aspects of the stages and functions of manufacturing, and thereby achieve the flexibility that allows pursuit of multiple strategic goals – cost, quality, and responsiveness to market demand – all at the same time.

Within this context of flexibility, and the broader era of decentralization and pressure for innovation (Miles et al., 2000), performance requirements are expanding. Self-starting and improvement-oriented behaviours are increasingly critical, as reflected by the emerging interest in concepts such as proactivity (Campbell, 2000; Crant, 2000; Parker et al., 2006). For example, within traditional manufacturing jobs, or what Ilgen and Hollenbeck (1991) referred to as 'bureaucratic prototype' jobs because of their low information processing requirements, effective performance typically involves following specified procedures and using technical skills to execute a narrow and fixed set of tasks. However, within agile manufacturing, effective performance relies on proactively applying a range of emergent skills and knowledge to meet collective goals. In the words of the then-managing director of Rover UK, 'everyone now has two jobs: first to build the car, second to find ways of doing it better' (Caulkin, 1993: 24).

To effectively carry out such expanded roles, employees need to define their roles differently. In a study of production operators in a company with

traditional work organization, Parker (1996) described how many operators had a narrow and passive ‘that’s not my job’ role orientation. For example, one operator felt responsible for the quality of what he produced only until ‘it’s put on the floor’ (p. 290); another operator described how his role involved ‘turning my work out and making sure it’s turned out properly, and that’s about it really’ (p. 290). Parker (1996) argued such a narrow and passive role orientation would be counter-productive in an agile manufacturing context. Instead, Parker et al. (1997) proposed the need for a more flexible role orientation in which individuals define their role broadly rather than narrowly, such as by accepting responsibility for team and organizational goals and outcomes rather than only for task-specific, individual goals and outcomes, and in which individuals define their job in proactive rather than passive terms, such as by perceiving it as their responsibility to anticipate and prevent problems, rather than to only react to problems. However, this assumption – that having a role orientation that is flexible rather than narrow leads to better employee job performance in agile manufacturing contexts – was not tested. This is the goal of the first study presented in this article. In the second study, the moderating role of autonomy in the relationship between flexible role orientation and job performance is tested. In both studies, flexible role orientation is operationalized by assessing the extent that employees’ accept responsibility for problems that arise from longer-term team and organizational goals, seeing those problems as part of ‘my job’. Low scores suggest employees feel ownership of task-specific, individual goals with short-term time horizons only, and thereby have a relatively narrow and inflexible role orientation (Parker et al., 1997).

Each study, its rationale and findings, are now discussed in turn.

### **Study I: Role orientation and work performance**

Work performance comprises those behaviours that are under an individual’s control, and which contribute to, or detract from, organizational goal attainment (Campbell et al., 1993). Performance is important because it is a critical determinant of individual, team and organizational effectiveness; ‘effectiveness’, in turn, refers to the value of the outcomes that flow from performance (Campbell et al., 1993). Any measure of performance should capture all aspects of behaviour that have value for the organization, while excluding aspects that are outside of the individual’s control (Campbell et al., 1973). In recent years, consistent with this principle, conceptualizations of performance have broadened beyond the traditional focus on core task performance to include proactive, adaptive, citizenship, and other such behaviours (e.g. Griffin et al., 2007; Ilgen & Pulakos, 1999; Murphy & Jackson, 1999). I adopt such a broad definition of performance here.

Porter and Lawler (1968) argued that an individual's effort only translates into high job performance if the individual has a clear understanding of the ways in which it is appropriate to direct that effort. They give an example of how an inappropriate role perception – such as a police officer who sees his/her job as filling jail cells – can result in many false arrests. How one defines one's role affects performance by directing effort towards particular behaviours rather than others. Theoretically, this premise is consistent with role-identity theory. In the area of organizational citizenship behaviour, it has been argued that individuals will be inclined to display citizenship behaviour if they define that behaviour as in-role and hence reflective of their sense of self (Kamdar et al., 2006). The motivation to engage in behaviour that is defined as within one's job is greater than the motivation to engage in behaviours seen as outside of one's job (Morrison, 1994). More broadly, individuals' role identity guides their behaviour because individuals prefer to exhibit behaviours that are congruent with their self-concept (Neale & Griffin, 2006). For example, people are more likely to engage in various forms of pro-social behaviour (e.g. volunteering) when they define themselves as occupants of pro-social roles (e.g. volunteer) (Callero et al., 1987; Grube & Piliavin, 2000). The greater the overlap of one's self-conception of important work behaviours with the system requirements, the more effective one's performance will be (Neale & Griffin, 2006).

Also relevant to understanding the relationship between role orientation and job performance is goal setting theory (Locke & Latham, 1990), which proposes that the goals individuals have, and are committed to, guide their subsequent behaviour. Accepting and being committed to specific and difficult goals lead to better performance than having no goals, easy goals, or general 'do your best' goals (Latham & Locke, 1991). Individuals with a more flexible role orientation feel ownership towards specific and difficult goals beyond their narrow job (e.g. customer satisfaction, fast lead times), and hence are more likely to focus their effort towards achieving these goals than individuals who consider these aspects as 'not part of my job'. Flexible role orientation is thus a motivational concept that is particularly relevant in terms of the direction of behaviours that it energizes.

Although the importance of possessing a particular role orientation for guiding behaviour has long been advocated and is theoretically plausible, the actual effect of an employees' role orientation on their performance has had relatively little attention. A few researchers have observed that the way individuals define their roles affects specific behaviours. For example, Benner et al. (1996) described how nurses who see their role as providing total patient care engaged in different activities, such as involving patients' families in the treatment process, than those who viewed their role as delivering high-quality

technical care. However, only a handful of quantitative studies have tested the link between role orientation and job behaviours. Howell and Boies (2004) found that technological innovators with a flexible role orientation in which, for example, they felt concern for a range of organizational issues beyond one's immediate job were more likely to generate creative ideas. Morrison (1994) showed that employees who saw citizenship behaviours as within their role were more likely to perform these behaviours than individuals who saw these behaviours as beyond their role (see also Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2004; Hofmann et al., 2003). Tepper and Taylor (2003) similarly showed that supervisors who defined their role as including mentoring were more likely to engage in this behaviour. Finally, Parker et al. (2006) showed that a more flexible role orientation predicted a more proactive approach to problem solving (e.g. solving problems in a way as to prevent their reoccurrence) and more proactive idea implementation (e.g. self-implementation of ideas). Collectively, these studies suggest that how one defines their role, influences their subsequent behaviour. None of these studies, however, considered the relationship between flexible role orientation and overall job performance.

I propose a positive relationship between flexible role orientation and job performance. Flexible role orientation is particularly relevant to the agile manufacturing context within which both studies were located. The higher an employee scores on flexible role orientation, the more they are likely to perform effectively because they will proactively engage in emergent tasks over and above their established tasks in order to solve problems and pursue improvements in domains beyond their immediate job. For example, production employees will not only operate their machines; they will engage in improvement activities and accept additional responsibilities to achieve longer-term goals such as customer satisfaction. Previous research evidence suggests that such flexible and proactive behaviours are important aspects of overall job performance in most contexts (Frese & Fay, 2001; Griffin et al., 2007). As described earlier, such behaviours are increasingly recognized as important within agile manufacturing. Thus, the hypothesis is:

*Hypothesis 1a:* Flexible role orientation will positively predict job performance.

Although not the primary focus of this article, I also investigate the incremental validity of flexible role orientation in predicting performance. First, because previous research has established the importance of motivation in driving performance, I investigate whether role orientation predicts job performance over and above the motivational variable of job satisfaction. Meta-analytic evidence (Judge et al., 2001) suggests a moderately strong



positive relationship between overall job satisfaction and performance (corrected correlation = .30), particularly in high-complexity jobs. It was thus important to investigate how role orientation affects performance over and above job satisfaction, which has been shown to have a small positive correlation with flexible role orientation (Parker, 2000). Such an analysis helps to rule out the possibility that any role orientation–performance association is spurious, or attributable to their joint relationship with job satisfaction. In addition, such an analysis helps to show the distinctiveness of flexible role orientation as a motivational concept.

Second, flexible role orientation might co-vary with some personality dimensions of individuals that have also been linked to performance. I controlled for the influence of two such variables, generalized self-efficacy and internal locus of control, that have been suggested to be part of the higher-order concept of core self-evaluations (Judge & Bono, 2001). Generalized self-efficacy is a stable cognition that people hold, reflecting the expectation that they possess the ability to successfully perform tasks in a variety of achievement situations (Sherer et al., 1982). Internal locus of control refers to the tendency to believe that outcomes such as rewards are under one's own control, or are a result of one's own actions (Rotter, 1966). A recent meta-analysis (Judge & Bono, 2001) showed that generalized self-efficacy and internal locus of control were both positively associated with job performance ( $r = .23$ ,  $r = .22$ , respectively). It is possible that, as well as enhancing job performance, core self-evaluations will positively relate to a more flexible role orientation, thus artificially inflating the relationship between role orientation and performance. Evidence shows that flexible role orientation is positively correlated with a type of self-efficacy, role breadth self-efficacy (Parker et al., 2006). One would also expect internal locus of control to be positively related to flexible role orientation since the former is about recognizing oneself as being in control of outcomes, and flexible role orientation is about accepting ownership and responsibility for broad and flexible outcomes. I therefore controlled for the influence of both generalized self-efficacy and internal locus of control.

Third, I controlled for the influence of employees' job aspiration, or the extent to which an individual has an interest in, and engages with, the work environment, such as through setting ambitious goals and being alert to new opportunities (Warr, 1990). One would expect individuals high in aspiration to be more likely to seek out new experiences and thereby develop a broader and more flexible orientation towards their role. At the same time, concepts related to job aspiration, such as striving for achievement, have been shown to predict job performance (Barrick et al., 2002).

It is nevertheless expected that flexible role orientation will predict higher job performance after controlling for job satisfaction, generalized self-efficacy, locus of control, and job aspiration because flexible role orientation captures something unique. Specifically, flexible role orientation is a proactive concept (Parker, 2000). It reflects the active process of cognitive job crafting in which an individual has expanded their role definition to include the emergent and more proactive requirements of a flexible role. It is therefore expected that flexible role orientation will motivate proactive behaviours, such as pursuing improvements in domains beyond one's immediate job, to a greater extent than the other predictors included in the study. To the extent that such behaviours are important for overall job performance, flexible role orientation will provide added value as a predictor. The hypothesis is:

*Hypothesis 1b:* Flexible role orientation will positively predict higher job performance after controlling for the effects of job satisfaction, generalized self-efficacy, locus of control, and job aspiration.

### Organizational context

This study examined the effect of production employees' role orientation on their overall job performance within an agile manufacturing context. The production employees (testers, assemblers, quality control staff, etc.) were from one site of a medium-sized electronics company in the United Kingdom. Many of the assemblers were women, as is typical within the small-component manufacturing industry. In order to improve quality whilst simultaneously achieving lower cost and faster lead times, two complementary initiatives were introduced within the production department: grouping work processes into product-based rather than functional cells, and self-managing teams in which multi-skilled employees were given greater authority to manage their day-to-day activities. These agile manufacturing initiatives built on the prior introduction of various flexible manufacturing technologies, and preceded the introduction of just-in-time. Role orientation was assessed at a point when one product-based self-managing team had been introduced as a pilot in one area, but these initiatives had not been implemented across the whole site. Performance ratings were then obtained four months later when the organization was in the early stages of introducing self-managing teams, as well as 18 months later when self-managing teams had been fully introduced. The study also investigated the effect of role orientation at this initial time on change in performance over the 14-month period.

## Participants

Three partially overlapping samples were used to test Hypothesis 1a. The first sample ( $N = 58$ ) was used to predict overall job performance at four months; the second sample ( $N = 41$ ) was used to predict performance at 18 months; and the third sample ( $N = 32$ ) was used to predict change in job performance over 14 months. Specifically, the initial sample of 58 production employees was all those who responded to the survey (the response rate was over 80 per cent) and for whom there was performance data collected from the manager four months later. The second sample was those 41 production employees who responded to the initial survey and for whom there were also performance ratings data available from the manager 18 months later. There was overlap of this sample with the first sample because some of those with performance data at 18 months also had performance data available at four months. The third sample was 32 employees for whom there was performance data available at both times; in essence, this sample is the intersection between the first and second sample. There were no statistically significant differences between these sub-samples in terms of age, length of time in the job, or the percentage of women ( $F < 1$ ). The mean age in years for the three samples respectively was as follows: 32.98 (SD = 10.30), 33.92 (SD = 10.67), 33.35 (SD = 10.42). The mean length of time in the job in years was as follows: 2.19 (SD = 3.38), 2.17 (SD = 3.46), and 2.62 (SD = 3.79). The percentage of women for each sample was 61 per cent, 67 per cent and 64 per cent. The high number of women in the sample reflects the type of work (e.g. assembly of small components), and is quite typical within the industry.

## Measures

The following biographical information was collected for each respondent: age (in years); length of service (in years); gender (scored: male = 1; female = 2); and job title. *Flexible role orientation* was assessed using Parker et al.'s (1997) measure of production ownership that was designed to assess flexible role orientation. Employees were asked to indicate the extent to which various problems reflecting longer-term goals beyond one's immediate technical job (e.g. customer dissatisfaction, slow delivery times) would be of personal concern to them rather than 'someone else's concern'. The response scale was from 1 (*to no extent – of no concern to me*) to 5 (*very large extent – most certainly of concern to me*). A higher score on the total scale indicates ownership of work-unit goals beyond one's immediate technical job, and therefore suggests a more flexible role orientation. A lower score suggests

a narrower, 'that's not my job' orientation. This measure of role orientation has been shown to be reliable and valid, and to be amenable to change over time (Parker et al., 1997).<sup>2</sup> Subsequent analyses have shown that the measure is factorially distinct from measures of affective commitment, job strain, and job satisfaction (Parker, 2000). This method of assessing role orientation is preferable to directly asking respondents how broadly or flexibly they view their role because it avoids problems of social desirability bias. The approach was also considered preferable to asking questions such as 'to what extent is this your responsibility' or 'part of your role' because the latter approach can result in respondents' reporting their perception of their formal job description rather than how they personally define their role. It is the latter that is of interest here.

Warr et al.'s (1979) 14-item scale was used to assess *job satisfaction*, including aspects that are intrinsic to the job (e.g. opportunity to use your ability) and aspects that are extrinsic to the job (e.g. management style). This scale correlated .70 with a measure of overall job satisfaction (Warr et al., 1979). Items are scored from 1 (extremely dissatisfied) to 7 (extremely satisfied).

*Generalized self-efficacy* was assessed via five items, such as 'when I make plans I am almost certain I can make them work' (see Appendix 1 for all items). These items are similar to those in Sherer et al.'s (1982) measure of generalized self-efficacy (which also includes, for example, the item: 'when I make plans I am certain I can make them work'). *Internal locus of control* was assessed via two items: 'what happens to me in the future depends mostly on my own efforts', and 'I feel in control of the way my life is going'. *Job aspiration* was assessed via four items, such as 'I work hard to be the best at what I do'. These items overlap considerably with Warr's (1990) job aspiration scale. Because generalized self-efficacy, locus of control, and job aspiration were not established scales, we conducted an exploratory factor analysis of these items using principal axis factoring with varimax rotation.<sup>3</sup> As expected, there were three factors with eigen values greater than one, which together explained 55 per cent of the variance in the items. The items formed three distinct and internally consistent factors (see Appendix 1; Table A).

Manager ratings of employees were used to assess *overall job performance*. For the first set of performance ratings (obtained four months after the survey), data collection was part of a broader project to improve the performance appraisal system (reported elsewhere<sup>4</sup>). Specifically, three managers of production employees were asked to rate each employee on their overall job performance on a scale from 1 (low job performance) to 5 (high job performance). This overall rating was preceded by an in-depth repertory

grid interview (Kelly, 1955) lasting at least one hour. Specifically, using a triad procedure with employees as elements, researchers elicited a large number of performance constructs from each manager (e.g. takes initiative, is willing to help others), which the manager then used to rate their subordinates on a scale from 1 to 5. At the completion of the interview, managers rated each employee on their overall job performance. Managers were not aware of any intention to link their ratings to survey data. At the second time point (18 months after the survey), two managers (the third was no longer employed within the organization) rated production employees' overall job performance on the same scale. They made this overall rating after providing ratings on several specific performance dimensions that were deemed important within the organization. The correlation between the first and second set of manager ratings was .51, suggesting considerable stability in the rank order of overall performance assessments.

### Results and discussion

Table 1 shows the correlations between the major variables, and their descriptive statistics. Regression analyses were carried out to test the hypotheses. Mean substitution (SPSS) was used to deal with missing data and, because the hypothesis was directional, one-tailed tests of significance were used to evaluate the effect of role orientation on performance. Age, gender, and tenure all had significant correlations with at least one of the key variables, and therefore their effects were controlled for in the regression analyses.

Table 2 shows the results of a hierarchical regression analysis with job performance assessed four months later. After controlling for age, gender, job tenure, as well as job satisfaction and the individual difference variables, flexible role orientation was entered in the second step. Flexible role orientation contributed a significant amount of variance in job performance above previous variables, and its beta weight in the final equation was significant. This analysis was repeated with performance assessed at 18 months as the dependent variable. Again, flexible role orientation contributed a significant amount of variance in performance over and above the other variables, and had a significant beta weight in the final equation.

Table 3 shows the results of a further regression analysis with performance after 18 months as the dependent variable, and controlling for performance after four months. Thus, the first step in the regression equation was the entry of control variables (age, gender, job tenure, job satisfaction, individual differences), the second step was the entry of performance after four months, and the third step was flexible role orientation. As expected,

**Table 1** Means, standard deviations of the main variables and their intercorrelations for Study 1

	Mean	SD	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.
1. Age	32.98	10.03	—									
2. Gender	1.61	.49	.46**	—								
3. Job tenure	2.19	3.35	.25+	.11	—							
4. Job satisfaction	4.77	.89	.44**	.25*	.20	.90						
5. Generalized self-efficacy	3.91	.47	.26*	-.11	.32*	.18	.69					
6. Internal locus of control	3.64	.82	.36**	.07	.14	.59**	.31*	.74				
7. Job aspiration	3.96	.55	-.14	-.25+	.09	-.06	.33*	.02	.67			
8. Flexible role orientation	3.09	.92	-.10	-.21	.07	.16	.23	.06	.22	.90		
9. Overall job performance at four months	3.47	.74	-.18	.08	-.09	.03	-.03	-.04	.02	.37**	—	
10. Overall job performance at 18 months	3.36	.76	-.35*	-.38*	-.13	-.10	.11	-.04	.17	.46**	.51**	—

Note: The diagonal shows internal consistency coefficients (Cronbach's alpha),  $N = 41$  for statistics involving job performance at 18 months, and  $N = 58$  for all other correlations and descriptive statistics.

\*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$ , +  $p < .10$ .

**Table 2** Results of hierarchical regression analyses for Study 1 predicting overall job performance at four months ( $N = 58$ ) and overall job performance at 18 months ( $N = 41$ )

Step	Variable	Predicting performance at four months		Predicting performance at 18 months	
		$\beta$ 's at Step 1	$\beta$ 's at Step 2	$\beta$ 's at Step 1	$\beta$ 's at Step 2
1	Age	-.35+	-.28+	-.33	-.28
	Gender	.23	.29+	-.24	-.19
	Job tenure	-.09	-.09	-.08	-.12
	Job satisfaction	.15	.03	.18	.07
	Generalized self-efficacy	.10	.02	.11	-.00
	Locus of control	-.04	.01	.04	.03
	Job aspiration	.00	-.04	.12	.09
2	Flexible role orientation		.41**		.43**
	$R^2$	.10	.24+	.23	.39**
	Adjusted $R^2$	.00	.09	.07	.24
	$\Delta R^2$		.14**		.16**

Note: One-tailed tests of significance were used to evaluate the effect of role orientation.

\*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$ .

after partialling out the effects of controls, prior performance contributed a significant amount of variance to the prediction of performance at 18 months. The entry of flexible role orientation at Step 3 contributed an additional 7 per cent of variance, and its beta weight was significant.

To check the robustness of the results under different circumstances, all of the above regression analyses were repeated without mean substitution and with a reduced number of predictors (i.e. excluding background controls). The same pattern of findings was obtained even with these changes.

In summary, this study suggests that individuals' orientation towards their role can influence their behaviour at work, resulting in more or less effective job performance. As such, the research supports theoretical propositions that role orientation guides one's work behaviour, and is consistent with earlier empirical findings (e.g. Morrison, 1994). The current study, however, extends existing research by showing that flexible role orientation affects job performance. Moreover, the current study provides stronger causal evidence, as it showed that flexible role orientation predicted change in performance over time (which is consistent with role orientation causing

**Table 3** Results of hierarchical regression analyses for Study 1 predicting overall job performance at 18 months controlling for prior performance ( $N = 32$ )<sup>a</sup>

Step	Variable	$\beta$ at Step 1	$\beta$ 's at Step 2	$\beta$ 's at Step 3
1.	Age	-.22	-.07	-.06
	Gender	-.17	-.26	-.17
	Job tenure	-.08	-.19	-.22
	Job satisfaction	-.01	-.03	-.07
	Generalized self-efficacy	.05	.23	.10
	Locus of control	.26	.14	.16
	Job aspiration	.17	.02	.04
2.	Job performance at four months		.58**	.37
3.	Flexible role orientation			.36*
	$R^2$	.21	.50*	.57*
	Adjusted $R^2$	.20	.32*	.38
	$\Delta R^2$		.29**	.07*

Note: <sup>a</sup> One-tailed tests of significance were used to evaluate the effect of role orientation.

\*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$ .

performance rather than performance causing a particular role orientation). This study also established the power of flexible role orientation in predicting job performance above related work attitudes.

A further issue concerns whether a flexible role orientation is important for performance in all contexts. We consider this issue in the second study.

## Study 2: Moderating role of context

In her study of role orientation in relation to organizational citizenship behaviour, Morrison (1994) suggested that there might be situations where it is particularly desirable for employees to conceptualize their jobs broadly so that they engage in a wider range of behaviours without seeing it as something extra. In relation to flexible role orientation, I argue here that one such context is where job autonomy is high.

A stronger relationship between role orientation and performance is expected for high job autonomy situations because, if people have discretion in their work, then their beliefs about their role have more scope to influence their work behaviour. This argument draws on Mischel's (1977) proposition



that the impact of individual differences on behaviour will be less in 'strong' situations, such as where job autonomy is low, than it is in 'weak' situations, such as where job autonomy is high. Such an argument is consistent with Judge et al.'s (2001) finding of a stronger relationship between job satisfaction and job performance in more complex jobs, and is consistent with Barrick and Mount (1993) who found personality had a stronger impact on performance in high autonomy jobs. A related argument is that, in high autonomy situations where direct supervision and tight specification of procedures are lacking, attitudes, cognitions and motives can be an important control mechanism (Ouchi, 1977); essentially constituting a form of cultural control (Child, 1984). In contrast, where autonomy is low, attitudes and beliefs have less bearing on their job performance because behaviour can be more readily controlled through direct supervision and formalization.

A further reason for the relative importance of role orientation in high autonomy situations relates to the behaviours required in these situations. That is, self-directed and flexible behaviours to achieve goals beyond individual task performance are likely to be more important in autonomous contexts than in traditional contexts. For example, key competencies identified as important within high autonomy settings include being oriented towards team goals, interpersonal skills, and flexibility (Parker et al., 1994). As such, a role orientation that encapsulates these behaviours (a flexible role orientation) is likely to more strongly affect overall job performance in high autonomy settings than it will in contexts where such behaviours are less important or desirable. The hypothesis is as follows:

*Hypothesis 2:* The positive relationship between flexible role orientation and job performance will be moderated by job autonomy such that this relationship is stronger when autonomy is high.

This hypothesis was tested using a sample that had sufficient heterogeneity in job types to investigate differences in job autonomy. This study also provided a further test of Hypothesis 1a and Hypothesis 1b.

### Organizational context

The organization was one site of an American-owned multinational manufacturing company located in the UK. The company, a chemical processing company, was under pressure to enhance product quality, and to innovate in response to market and technological developments. An empowerment initiative had been introduced to enhance employee multi-skilling and job

autonomy across the site. Various forms of advanced manufacturing technology had also been introduced where appropriate. Management layers were reduced and the organization was restructured into business and support teams. There had also been considerable downsizing within the organization, which had been implemented in a strategic and planned manner with minimal forced redundancies.

### Participants

In total, 211 employees completed the survey (which was a response rate of 78 per cent) and 270 individuals had performance data. Some 163 employees completed the survey and also had matched performance data. The final sample was 153 of these employees, who had no missing data on the key variables.

The sample included many job types, such as production operators, managers, accountants, administrators, and other professionals. The mean age of the sample was 40.37 years ( $SD = 10.35$ ) and the average tenure was 16.43 years ( $SD = 10.02$ ). Eight per cent of the sample were women, which is a typical low proportion within the industry (chemical processing). Most of the women in the sample were in white-collar jobs (e.g. administrators, accountants, secretaries).

### Measures

The survey assessed respondents' age (in years); tenure (in years); gender (scored: male = 1; female = 2); and job title. Job title was used to identify if employees were managers or supervisors, which was used as a dummy variable in the analyses. *Flexible role orientation* was assessed with the same measure as that described in Study 1, although some items were adapted slightly to suit the context (see Appendix 1). *Job satisfaction* was assessed with the same scale described in Study 1. *Generalized self-efficacy* was assessed with three items, such as 'I know what to do when things go wrong in my job' (see Appendix 1). *Job aspiration*, or the extent to which an individual has an interest in, and engages with, the work environment (Warr, 1990), was assessed via four items, such as 'I try to learn more about my job every day' (see Appendix 1).<sup>5</sup> Because generalized self-efficacy and job aspiration were not standard scales, an exploratory factor analysis using principal axis factoring and oblimin rotation was conducted with these items to determine whether they were distinct factors. Job satisfaction and flexible role orientation were included in this analysis to check their distinctiveness.

The four-factor solution (which accounted for 50 per cent of the variance in the items) showed that the items loaded on different factors as expected (see Appendix 1; Table B).

*Job autonomy* was assessed using Jackson et al.'s (1993) six-item measure of method control developed especially for production environments (e.g. 'to what extent do you vary how you do your work?'). The response scale is from 1 (not at all) to 5 (a great deal). The scale has been shown to have good reliability and to discriminate between different jobs (Jackson et al., 1993). Because job autonomy is a contextual variable, it was appropriate to aggregate it to the group level rather than treating it as an individual-level variable. The basis for aggregation was job type. There were 15 job types in the organization (e.g. operations/support manager, coordinator, chemical engineer, laboratory technician, process/operator/warehouse/store technicians, specialists). Classification into these job types was based on the employees' self-categorizations in the survey, which were then cross-checked against human resource records. There was systematic variation in autonomy across different job types,  $F(14, 206) = 4.23, p < .01$ . The intra-class correlation coefficient comparing the between-group to the within-group variation (ICC-1; Shrout & Fleiss, 1979) was .20, which is sufficiently high to justify aggregation. The mean  $r_{wg(j)}$  statistic (James et al., 1993) was .80, which exceeds Glick's (1985) recommendation of .60 as a cut-off for acceptable inter-rater agreement values. There was thus good support for the aggregation of autonomy to the job level.

Employees were allocated the mean autonomy score for their job type. Averaged across the group, the highest autonomy jobs were managers; the lowest autonomy jobs were laboratory technicians. To check the validity of these self-ratings of autonomy, we examined the importance of 'decision-making and judgement ability' indicated for the various job types using the US government's occupational classification system (<http://online.onetcenter.org>). There was a good match. For example, for managers (who had the highest level of job autonomy in the sample), the importance of this skill was identified as 82 out of 100, whereas it was 48 out of 100 for laboratory technicians (the lowest rated level of job autonomy in the sample).

*Overall job performance* was assessed using performance appraisal data collected in an annual appraisal process several months after the assessment of role orientation. The management team identified eight critical dimensions of performance, including 1) breadth of knowledge and skills to do tasks outside work team, 2) minimal degree of supervisory support required, 3) flexibility and openness to new ideas and handles change well, 4) ability to learn new skills well, 5) promotes team work, 6) goes extra mile,

tries to remove barriers to team work, 7) lack of disciplinary action, and 8) attendance. All employees were rated on a scale from 0 (low) to 9 (high) by their supervisor or manager ( $N = 38$ ) on these dimensions. An exploratory factor analysis (using principal axis factoring and varimax rotation) showed that the first six performance dimensions formed a performance factor whereas attendance and lack of disciplinary action formed a second factor (see Appendix 1; Table C). Together these factors accounted for 64 per cent of the variance in items. The six performance dimensions were averaged to provide a measure of overall job performance ( $\alpha = .94$ ).

## Results and discussion

Table 4 shows the means and standard deviations of the variables, and their intercorrelations (with listwise deletion of missing cases because the sample size was sufficiently large to support this approach to dealing with missing data). Gender, tenure, and managerial status were significantly correlated with major study variables, so their effects were controlled for in the main analysis.

To evaluate the hypotheses, a hierarchical regression with job performance as the dependent variable was carried out (see Table 5). Any cases with missing variables were excluded. Because the hypotheses were directional, one-tailed tests of significance were used to evaluate the main and interactive effects of role orientation. As shown in Table 5, after the entry of controls (gender, tenure, and managerial status) and job satisfaction, generalized self-efficacy, and job aspiration, role orientation was a significant predictor of job performance, as was job autonomy. The interaction term also had a significant beta weight, and accounted for approximately 3 per cent of the additional variance in job performance.<sup>6</sup>

The method recommended by Jaccard et al. (1990) was used to plot this two-way interaction (see Figure 1 for a plot). There was a positive relationship between role orientation and performance for those with high job autonomy (i.e. one SD above the mean), but a weak or negligible relationship between these variables for those with low job autonomy (i.e. one SD below the mean). The highest performers had high autonomy and high scores on flexible role orientation; the lowest performers were those with low scores on flexible role orientation, regardless of their level of job autonomy.

In summary, this study showed that, as expected, possessing a broad and flexible role orientation appears to be most important in jobs where individuals are relatively autonomous. Given the widespread introduction of initiatives that enhance job autonomy, such as self-managing teams and empowerment (e.g. DiMaggio, 2001), the concept of flexible role orientation

**Table 4** Means, standard deviations of the main variables and their intercorrelations for Study 2 (N = 153)

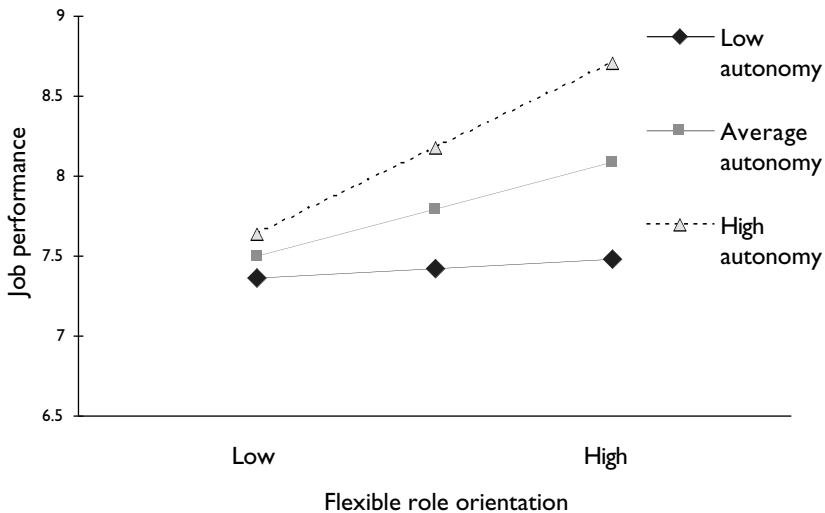
Variables	Mean	SD	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.
1. Age	40.37	10.35	—									
2. Gender	1.08	.28	-.08	—								
3. Tenure	16.43	10.02	.83**	-.15+	—							
4. Managerial status	.14	.35	.23**	-.06	.23**	—						
5. Job satisfaction	4.61	.83	.10	.02	.19*	.18*	.90					
6. Generalized self-efficacy	3.65	.78	.15+	-.19*	.12	.04	.00	.80				
7. Job aspiration	3.83	.72	-.10	-.14+	-.05	-.01	.01	.38**	.75			
8. Flexible role orientation	2.73	.67	.15+	.08	.12	.29**	.21*	.09	.20*	.91		
9. Job autonomy (aggregated)	3.88	.40	-.07	.19*	-.06	.50**	.13	.01	-.07	.14+	.81	
10. Job performance	6.52	1.21	-.15	.10	-.13	-.06	.06	-.08	-.07	.20*	.26**	.94

Note: Two-tailed tests were used for the evaluation of the statistical significance of all of the associations. Cronbach's alpha shown on the diagonal.  
 \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$ , +  $p < .10$ .

**Table 5** Results of hierarchical regression analyses for Study 2 predicting overall job performance ( $N = 155$ )

Step	Variable	Predicting job performance			
		$\beta$ 's at Step 1	$\beta$ 's at Step 2	$\beta$ 's at Step 3	$\beta$ 's at Step 4
1.	Managerial status	.06	.00	-.16	-.24*
	Gender	.06	.03	-.03	-.05
	Tenure	-.14	-.16	-.11	-.10
	Job satisfaction	.08	.05	.03	-.01
	Generalized self-efficacy	-.03	-.04	-.06	-.04
	Job aspiration	-.06	-.11	-.09	-.09
2.	Flexible role orientation		.23**	.24**	.24**
3.	Job autonomy (aggregated)			.29**	.31**
4.	Interaction between flexible role orientation & autonomy				.20**
$R^2$		.04	.08	.14**	.17*
Adjusted $R^2$		.00	.04	.09*	.12*
$\Delta R^2$		.03	.04**	.06**	.03*

Note: The displayed coefficients are standardized beta weights at each step. One-tailed tests of significance were used to evaluate the significance of the beta weights for the main and interactive effects of role orientation. \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$ .

**Figure 1** Interaction of flexible role orientation and job autonomy (aggregated) predicting job performance (Study 2)

should thus assume greater importance in many organizations. When the job context is constrained such that employees have low discretion, role orientation has little effect on performance.

### General discussion

The current studies collectively provide good evidence that employees' flexible role orientation affects their job performance, especially in high autonomy situations. These findings are significant because they suggest a relatively unexplored avenue for performance enhancement. Previous research on performance determinants has mostly focused on relatively stable personality variables, such as conscientiousness (e.g. Motowidlo & Van Scotter, 1994) and general ability (e.g. McCloy et al., 1994). However, a focus on personality and general ability alone as predictors of performance can be restrictive because these variables are not particularly amenable to change. As such, implications of findings relating personality and ability variables to performance pertain mostly to selection.

At the same time, researchers have considered more malleable variables, such as job satisfaction, as predictors of performance. The value in this latter approach is that much evidence shows it is possible to enhance these affective responses, and therefore this might be a mechanism by which performance is improved. The same is true for role orientation; previous research suggests that broader and more flexible role orientation can develop as a result of work enrichment (Parker et al., 1997) and is associated with motivational states such as affective commitment (Morrison, 1994). In general, this emphasis on aspects of individuals that can be developed to enhance their performance is consistent with the 'positive organizational behaviour' (POB) movement, in which a key focus is on positive state-like aspects that are malleable and can be enhanced (Luthans, 2002).

Changing the way employees see their role might therefore be a powerful way of enhancing job performance. Indeed, it is likely that managers do expend considerable effort trying to shape the way individuals construct their roles, especially during times of organizational change (often under the banner of 'culture change'). Unfortunately research has rarely paid attention to role orientation and how it might be influenced. Morrison (1994: 1563) similarly concluded that it would be valuable 'for managers to understand the subtle social and psychological factors that influence employees' perceptions of their job responsibilities'. For example, Morrison (1994) found that perceived job breadth was narrower for those with longer tenure, suggesting that role orientation might be affected by socialization processes.

Likewise, as noted above, Parker et al. (1997) showed how job enrichment can shape role orientation. One explanation of this latter association is suggested by Bachrach and Jex's (2000) laboratory study, in which negative mood led employees to define fewer extra-role tasks as 'in role'. In turn, Fisher (2002) found that enriched job characteristics resulted in positive mood. Thus job enrichment might enhance employees' positive mood, which then leads them to define more proactive responsibilities as part of their role. Other potential influences on role orientation (e.g. professional development, training, group processes, communication) have received little attention. The current article suggests that more attention to the process of developing an expanded role orientation amongst employees will be a worthwhile endeavour, particularly in self-managing contexts.

A further implication of this research is that it suggests flexible role orientation might be important not only in promoting better performance, but in facilitating greater performance improvement. Specifically, although there were some limitations to this analysis (particularly a small sample size), as I discuss further shortly, the first study showed that flexible role orientation predicted a higher level of performance 18 months later, after controlling for earlier performance. One interpretation of this finding supports the moderating role of job autonomy established in the second study. That is, by the second time point, when there was greater job autonomy in the situation due to the introduction of autonomous teams, the 'weaker' situation might have allowed individuals with a more flexible role orientation even greater opportunity to perform more effectively, thereby enabling them to further improve their performance. Likewise, the type of behaviours facilitated by a more flexible role orientation at this time would be even more important given the more autonomous setting, once again allowing for an improvement in overall job performance. In essence, supporting the role of autonomy identified in Study 2, those with a flexible role orientation at the outset might have performed even better over time because of the increased autonomy in the situation.

A further possibility, which is more speculative, is that those with a flexible role orientation flourish in the situation, and are best able to seize the opportunities offered by the more autonomous and expanded roles. This might then lead to a positive dynamic spiral in which, for example, individuals with a flexible role orientation perform more effectively, so managers then give them further decision-making latitude, which in turn leads to an even more flexible role orientation, with a further increase in performance. Further research with a more complex design, such as using a time series analysis, is needed to examine the possibility of a positive dynamic spiral.



## Limitations and further research

The current studies have strengths, such as the use of multiple methods and longitudinal datasets, but they also have limitations. The small sample size in the first study limits its power to detect effects. The first study also had a single item measure of job performance, which might have jeopardized its reliability. However, the extensive process by which these assessments were obtained (involving, for example, managers' generating performance constructs using a repertory grid procedure) means it is likely that the assessments were quite stable. Both studies were conducted within manufacturing settings, which reduces the generalizability of the findings (although the second study included job types found in many contexts, such as managers and accountants). The measures of the individual difference variables, although distinct from each and reasonably internally consistent, were nevertheless designed for the specific contexts and have not been used much elsewhere.

A surprising finding in the current study was the relative unimportance of previously identified predictors of performance, particularly job satisfaction. In their meta-analysis, Judge et al. (2001) found a stronger relationship between job satisfaction and performance for high-complexity jobs than for low-complexity jobs, and when an overall measure of job performance was used. In the current studies, the jobs were all within the manufacturing context, and hence likely to be relatively less complex than those in many other industries (e.g. professional services, etc.). In addition, the current study used a measure of job satisfaction that was based on facets rather than an overall assessment. Together, these aspects might explain the non-significant effect of job satisfaction on performance. Regarding the non-significance of the other predictors, one issue might have been the relatively poorer quality assessment of these variables (i.e. the use of non-standard instruments). In particular, the relatively low internal consistency of the job aspiration and generalized self-efficacy measures in Study 1 lowers the likelihood of finding effects for these variables.

One avenue for further research is to include a fuller nomological net of concepts related to flexible role orientation to establish their inter-relationships. In particular, the current research proposed that flexible role orientation would predict performance because of its impact on proactive behaviours, such as taking charge (Morrison & Phelps, 1999) and proactive idea implementation (Parker et al., 2006), but this mediating role of proactive behaviour needs to be tested explicitly. Why role orientation is more important in situations of high job autonomy also needs further investigation. There are also other potential moderators of the link between

role orientation and performance. For example, in jobs where there has been very strong socialization processes, or where there is close prescription of requirements, there might be little meaningful variation in orientations (Conley & Sackett, 1987). On the other hand, role orientation might be particularly significant during times of change, where job incumbents' beliefs about their role might lag behind managers' expectations.

A further issue concerns the operationalization of role orientation. Both methods used by Parker et al. (1997) were developed to avoid problems of social desirability. However, one downside is that these indirect approaches might be open to alternative interpretations. These measures also assessed flexible role orientation for production employees, and the items will need to be adapted for other contexts. For example, to assess flexible role orientation amongst nurses, items might assess ownership of important ward-level problems such as 'a slow turnover of beds in the ward due to inefficient processes' and 'near misses or errors going unreported in the ward'. To assess flexible role orientation amongst managers, however, items should assess more than ownership of departmental-level problems (which is to be expected from managers) and instead assess ownership of organizational-level problems. Thus, items might assess ownership of problems such as 'your organization's structure meant a lack of interdepartmental co-ordination' and 'there were new opportunities or threats in your organization's environment that were not being considered'.

More generally, there is unlikely to be a straightforward, 'one-size-fits-all' method of assessing role orientation. Morrison's (1994) approach when assessing perceived job breadth was to ask individuals to rate various citizenship behaviours as an 'expected part of the job' or as 'above and beyond what is expected'. This approach, or variants of it, have been used by others (e.g. Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2004). With this technique, however, it is not clear how much the respondent takes into account formal job descriptions when responding. Podsakoff et al. (2000) critiqued Morrison's approach for this ambiguity, and advocated a 'purer' assessment of extra-role behaviour that takes into account whether a particular behaviour is an explicit part of the job description, is included in training, and is formally rewarded and punished. Kamdar et al. (2006) took this approach to assessing citizenship role definition, and items measured whether the employee saw citizenship activities as part of their job, as recognized and rewarded, and as associated with sanctions if not carried out (a higher score on all these aspects meant citizenship was more part of one's role definition). However, this approach is rather different to the concept of role orientation that is of interest here, which is how an individual personally defines their role (regardless of how it is formally defined within the organization). Research that compares

alternative ways of assessing and conceptualizing role orientation and role definition would clearly be valuable.

Finally, the focus in this study was on flexible role orientation. A small number of previous studies have focused on the extent to which citizenship behaviour is considered part of one's role. However, as discussed earlier, further dimensions or types of role orientation might be appropriate depending on the requirements of the organization and the context. For example, if innovation is especially important, one might assess the extent to which one's role orientation incorporates the need for creativity. Does the individual see it as part of his/her role to be creative and/or to support and facilitate the creativity of others? In the case of managers, one might be interested in the extent to which managers define their role in transformational terms (do they see it as 'their job' to develop and inspire employees, for example, or do they see their job primarily in terms of control and command?). The choice of the most relevant dimension of role orientation to focus on will depend on the specific behaviours that one is trying to understand and influence within the context.

## Conclusion

This article suggests that the way individuals construct their role can be a powerful influence on their actual behaviour, resulting in more or less effective job performance. This positive effect of flexible role orientation on performance is especially true in high autonomy situations. Given the rapid change occurring in many work places, employees will increasingly need to accommodate new and expanded role expectations. The current article suggests the value of more research on the process of shaping and promoting an expanded role orientation amongst employees. The development of a flexible role orientation represents a potential avenue for enhancing employee performance that has thus far had relatively little scholarly attention.

## Notes

- 1 The term role orientation is preferred to that of role perception. The latter term has a more generic meaning, and is often used to describe perceived role characteristics, such as role ambiguity.
- 2 A second role orientation measure used by Parker et al. (1997) assesses employees' perceptions of the importance of various competencies for effective performance. In the current study, this second measure of flexible role orientation was highly correlated with the production ownership measure that was used ( $r = .70$ ). It predicted job performance, but was less important than production ownership, and was thus excluded for simplicity.

- 3 A larger sample ( $N = 165$ ) was available to conduct this analysis because these items were completed by non-production employees as well as production employees (role orientation items were only completed by production employees).
- 4 See Parker et al. (1994).
- 5 These items were different to those used in Study 1 due to the participating organization's desire to include measures used in previous surveys. However, the items in both studies captured the concept of job aspiration.
- 6 This analysis was also conducted as a multilevel analysis using MLWin with job autonomy as a group-level variable, and flexible role orientation and job performance as individual-level variables. The same pattern of findings was obtained, including a significant interaction between flexible role orientation and job autonomy.

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## Appendix I

**Table A** Results from exploratory factor analysis of generalized self-efficacy, internal locus of control, and job aspiration (Study 1,  $N = 165$ )

	Generalized self-efficacy	Internal locus of control	Job aspiration
I am good at thinking of better ways to do things	.73		
I am good at solving problems to do with work	.63		
I can do just about anything when I set my mind to it	.56		
People tend to come to me if they need help with work problems	.41		
When I make plans, I'm almost certain I can make them work	.35		
I feel in control of the way my life is going		.73	
What happens to me in the future mostly depends on my own efforts		.71	
I try to avoid added responsibilities in my job (rs)			.63
I am uneasy when faced with problems that have no single solution (rs)			.57
I enjoy the challenge of difficult targets			.50
I work hard to be the best at work I do			.34

Note: (rs) means the item was reversed scored. Factor loadings < .30 not shown.

**Table B** Results from exploratory factor analysis of job satisfaction, flexible role orientation, job aspiration, and generalized self-efficacy (Study 2,  $N = 153$ )

	Job satisfaction	Flexible role orientation	Job aspiration	Generalized self-efficacy
<i>How satisfied are you with:</i>				
The amount of responsibility you are given	.72			
The opportunity to use your ability	.71			
Relationships between different levels in the organization	.69			
The amount of variety in your job	.68			
The recognition you get for good work	.68			
The attention paid to suggestions you make	.67			
Your salary	.58			
Your chance of promotion	.56			
The freedom to choose your own method of working	.56			

**Table B** continued

	<i>Job satisfaction</i>	<i>Flexible role orientation</i>	<i>Job aspiration</i>	<i>Generalized self-efficacy</i>
Your immediate boss	.49			
The way your firm is managed	.49			
The physical working conditions	.47			
Your fellow colleagues	.43			
Your job security	.37			
<i>To what the extent are the following of personal concern to you:</i>				
Some colleagues in your area were not pulling their weight?		.71		
Different people in your area were not co-ordinating their efforts?		.71		
Costs in your area were higher than budget?		.70		
There were strained relations among people in your area?		.67		
Stores and supplies in your area were higher than budget?		.66		
The quality of output from your area was not as good as it could be?		.64		
Some essential equipment in your area (plant) was not being well maintained?		.62		
Errors in incoming information were increasing over time?		.61		
Your customers (internal or external) were dissatisfied with what they receive?		.59		
<i>To what extent do you agree with the following:</i>				
When things go wrong in my job, I try to understand why so I can deal with the same problem more efficiently next time			.78	
When things go wrong in my job, I try to work out the reason			.70	
I would like to know more about various aspects of my job			.65	
I try to learn more about my job every day			.57	
I know what to do when things go wrong in my job				.80
I know intuitively how to deal with most problems in my job				.73
I am confident in doing my job				.45

Note: Loadings less than .30 not shown.



**Table C** Results from exploratory factor analysis of the company performance items (Study 2,  $N = 153$ )

<i>Performance dimensions</i>	<i>Job</i>	<i>Other</i>
	<i>performance</i>	
Goes extra mile, tries to remove barriers to team work	.87	
Flexibility and openness to new ideas & handles change well	.85	
Minimal degree of supervisory support required	.83	
Ability to learn new skills well	.82	
Promotes team work	.79	
Breadth of knowledge and skills to do tasks outside work team	.78	
Attendance		.57
Lack of disciplinary action		.52

Note: Loadings less than .30 not shown.

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