

To be role competent it is necessary to know when to follow and when to violate social roles.

- A. In order to cooperate effectively, members of social groups must control and coordinate one another's activities.
- B. One of the strongest forms of social control is the role.
 - A. It is useful to distinguish between role and position.
 - a. A position indicates where we stand in comparison to others in a social hierarchy; for example, on a college campus "president," "professor," "student," and "staff" are positions.
 - b. Roles are the behavioral expectations associated with a position; for example, faculty are expected to know their material, to convey it to students, and to show concern for student welfare.
 - B. Roles have at least four characteristics:
 - a. Roles are learned.
 - b. Roles are general.
 - c. Roles affect beliefs about the self.
 - d. Everyone plays multiple roles.

II. According to McCall and Simmons, three sets of factors determine how important a role is.

- A. The degree of support we receive for playing a role determines its salience to us.
 - A. In his Looking-Glass Self theory, Cooley states that we are affected by others' reactions to us.
 - B. Social comparison theory holds that we need to have our abilities and opinions validated by others.
- B. The amount of commitment we feel toward a role also determines role salience.
 - A. Self-perception theory maintains that rather than knowing internally what we think or feel, we observe our external actions and infer internal states.
 - B. If we see ourselves enacting a role, we assume it is a role we value.
- C. The kinds of rewards we receive for playing a role determines role salience.
 - A. Sometimes merely enacting a role gives us intrinsic rewards.
 - B. At other times we enact a role because it provides us with extrinsic rewards.

III. Embedded in every role are instructions about how to communicate that role.

- A. Erving Goffman has argued that we are like actors, putting on a performance.
 - A. Much of our social interaction is face-work.
 - a. Face is that part of self we present to others for approval.
 - b. Line consists of the verbal and nonverbal behaviors we use to present face.
 - c. Face-work is the time and effort we spend performing face.
 - d. competent individuals protect their own face and line and that of others.
 - B. To present face to others, we must control the environments in which we act as

well as the people who support our performances.

- a. The arena in which we perform is our front region; it consists of setting (environment) and personal front (clothing and artifacts.)
- b. When we are not performing, we escape to our back regions.
- c. The other people who support our performance are part of our role set; we coordinate our performance with them through altercasting, mirroring, and mutual negotiation.

B. Narrative theorists argue that we are storytellers.

- A. We create autobiographies to tell ourselves and others who we are.
- B. Groups create social identity by sharing stories about their successes and failures.
- C. Nations create myths that define national character and identity.

IV. Showing politeness and respect are skills essential to role competence.

A. Politeness is not just about trivial social niceties; it allows people to live in harmony.

B. There are three components to politeness and respect: interpersonal sensitivity, maintenance of face, and the ability to balance solidarity and independence.

A. In order to be polite, people need to be sensitive to others' needs.

- a. Sensitive communicators show empathic concern.
 - a. Empathy increases when we pay attention to others' emotional expressions.
 - b. Communicating more expressively can enhance the ability to empathize.
 - c. Empathic communicators resist defining others' experience in terms of their own.

b. Sensitive communicators can take the perspective of others.

- a. By consciously reminding ourselves to be more mindful, we can increase perspective-taking.
- b. Seeking feedback from others can correct faulty perspective-taking.

B. Being respectful implies a willingness and ability to maintain the face of others.

- a. Respectful communicators recognize how important it is for people to have their views of self accepted.
- b. Respectful communicators monitor their behavior for face-threatening acts.
- C. Politeness and respect involve being close without being intrusive and allowing others privacy without being distant.