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AN ANALYSIS OF THE DEVELOPMENT AND EVOLUTION OF ROLES IN THE SMALL GROUP

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This article presents a critique of current conceptualizations of roles and their development and evolution in the small group. An alternative model is presented, one that is grounded in a structuration perspective and conceives of "role" as social practice. Roles are seen as being produced and reproduced in interaction. Such a conceptualization is helpful in ascertaining the dynamic nature of roles in the small group. Implications for small group research are presented.

During a meeting of the 49th Congress on January 25, 1887, Joseph Emerson Brown, then a senator for the state of Georgia, made an impassioned plea to his colleagues to dismiss the women's suffrage amendment. Brown (1887) reasoned,

I believe that the Creator intended that the sphere of the males and females of our race should be different, and that their duties and obligations, while they differ materially, are equally important and equally honorable, and that each sex is equally well qualified by natural endowments for the discharge of the important duties which pertain to each. . . . This movement is an attempt to reverse the very laws of our being and to drag woman into an arena to which she is not suited, and to devolve upon her onerous duties which the Creator never intended that she should perform. (pp. 980, 983)

Americans would like to believe that the mode of thinking adopted by Mr. Brown has left us now, that we no longer believe in the partitioning of duties on the basis of biological sex. That belief has been a convenient one—a belief that, unless matched by action, will remain empty and hollow.

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No doubt, the strides made by women in the past 100 years have been great. Yet there are still many obstacles to be overcome if women are ever to be on an "even footing" with men. How can women ever achieve equity and equal status to that of men, given many Americans' belief that there are differentiated duties that are naturally supposed to be performed by the sexes? That question will be one of the concerns of this article.

The core of this article will be concerned with developing a theoretical framework for conceiving role as a communicative or interactive phenomenon. It delineates role development and change in small task-oriented groups. Although I will primarily focus on sex roles, the framework is flexible enough to encompass other role development and change as well. In this article, the proposed framework is applied to sex roles to gain an understanding of the "natural division of labor" between the sexes in the small group, a forum in which men and women will meet with increasing frequency in the years to come, and the evolving nature of that division.

In the course of this examination, I will first provide a review of the literature regarding the major conceptions of roles in the small group, identifying gaps and weaknesses in that research. Second, I will explicate the different types of roles that may develop and how, eventually, all can be subsumed under two types: task and maintenance. Third, I will explicate how a structuration terminology may help us account for inconsistencies in current and past research on the "division of labor" between the sexes and the processes involved in role evolution.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

THE CONCEPT OF ROLE

The term *role* has been treated in various ways in the scholarly literature. Goffman (1959), for example, saw roles from a dramaturgical perspective, describing people as actors in the great theater of life. Three perspectives on roles, however, have taken on importance in conducting small group research: One views roles as the

expectations regarding the behavior a specific individual is supposed to perform. The second perspective places an emphasis on the behaviors associated with a particular position in an organization or group. And the third views roles as the enacted behavior of individuals in a particular context.

First, Bormann (1990) explains that Robert Bales, a small group scholar, believed that roles were "all the group members' perceptions, evaluations, and expectations of an individual" (p. 160). Similarly, Bormann (1990) himself defines a role as "that set of perceptions and expectations shared by the members [of a group] about the behavior of an individual in both the task and social dimensions of group interaction" (p. 161). He further claims that "when the other members know what part a person will play and that person knows what part they expect of her or him, that person has assumed a role" (p. 161).

Some of these expectations may be labeled as what Bormann calls the "trait framework." Individuals in the group may come to stereotype the focal person on the basis of distinguishing personality traits (Bormann, 1990, p. 169). Logically extended, the concept of the trait framework also may be applied to stereotypes a person has developed regarding another and the behavior he or she is supposed to exhibit on the basis of biological sex, age, skin color, and other "ascriptive characteristics" (see Giddens, 1984, pp. 85-86). However, if these expectations are not shared by the focal individual, the individual does not have a role in the group. Only when "common expectations about what the person will do and say have been reached [does] the participant [have] a role in the group" (Bormann, 1990, p. 162).

Stated simply, viewing a role as the expectations shared by group members about the behaviors of a specific individual requires members and the focal person to *affix* behavioral expectations to individuals. In the expectations of members, the locus of "role" can be found. Such a view, however, suffers from several limitations, each of which has implications for the study of roles from a communication perspective.

First, the possibility exists that a person may never have a role in the group. This would be true of persons in the group whose

expectations of their behavior do not match the expectations of others in the group. Further, if the focal person's expectations are made manifest through behavior, there is once again an incongruity between the expectations of the other members and the behaviors performed by the focal person.

Second, although Bormann (1990) does claim that group members negotiate expectations, the emphasis is placed not so much on how those expectations are negotiated communicatively but on the expectations themselves. Because roles exist in the expectations that others have about an individual and that the individual has about himself or herself (and thus in the minds of others and self), that individual's actual behavior plays a relatively minor part in determining the individual's role. The role is not behavior—it is an expectation of behavior. From a communication perspective, such a view becomes limiting because the emphasis is not placed on how roles may be (communicatively) negotiated between individuals.

A third limitation concerns the actual locus of role; that is, if a role is to be found in the matching of expectations (or minds) of others with the expectations of the focal person, one question—can expectations ever truly overlap?—must be answered. Clearly, it cannot be denied that different members of a small group may have different expectations about the behavior associated with a particular individual. It becomes problematic in attempting to assess which persons' expectations "count" and which do not.

In contrast to viewing roles as the expectations of others, several authors (e.g., Katz & Kahn, 1978; McGrath, 1984) have taken the view that roles are equivalent to positions in a larger role system. Katz and Kahn, working from an organizational perspective, define roles as the activities or behaviors expected of a person in a particular office, such as foreman. It is in a holder of a particular office performing the behaviors expected of that office (position) that a role is formed. According to Katz and Kahn (1978), a role is "a set of expected activities associated with the occupancy of a given position" (p. 200). Similarly, McGrath (1984), applying Katz and Kahn's conception to the small group, contends that a role "is not characteristic of a particular person, but rather is a characteristic of the behavior of the incumbent of a particular position" (p. 249).

In delineating their concept of role and its function in the larger role system or organization, Katz and Kahn propose a model that describes the role episode, a sequence characterizing the ways role expectations are sent by the members of the role set to the focal person. Specifically, all the members of particular offices to which the focal person's office is attached may be thought of as the focal person's role set. These members have expectations about the behaviors of the focal person in a particular office or position. These expectations are then communicated to the focal person through various means. The focal person "receives" the expectations and acts accordingly. These four phases (expectations, sending expectations, receiving expectations, behaving) make up the role episode.

According to Katz and Kahn (1978),

To list the concepts in this order emphasizes one direction of causality—the influence of role expectations on behavior. There is also a feedback loop; the degree to which a person's behavior conforms to the expectations of the role set at one point in time will affect the state of those expectations at the next moment. (p. 195)

The emphasis in this model, then, is placed on members of the role set's expectations of the behaviors required of a particular position guiding the behavior of the person occupying that position. The direction of causality is indeed set.

Several problems are associated with any model that treats roles as the incumbent's expected behaviors of a particular position, however. First, such a perspective presumes that the role exists in the social system (in this case, an organization or small group) prior to the individual—minimal emphasis is placed on the development of roles or their evolution. The role is a position to which a person is assigned and then performs the behavior associated with that position. Second, in an organization or small group with preexisting positions, a person can be removed for nonperformance of the behavior expected of the position, but this is true to a lesser extent in many small groups, where positions, or roles, if you prefer, are to a greater extent communicatively negotiated between the members of the group and the focal person—a negotiation that is constantly in flux. This issue will be discussed in the section on the development and evolution of roles.

Ellis and Fisher (1994) further criticize the view that roles are to be considered as positions in a social system. They claim that such a view tends to exclude acknowledgment of the impact of external forces on the formation of roles. Larger social organizations, of which the small group is a part, also come to play a part in establishing positions. Ellis and Fisher also claim that, in contrast to Katz and Kahn (1978) and McGrath (1984), a role is to be defined, "to some extent, in terms of the communicative behaviors engaged in by the member occupying that role. The definition of a role solely as some preordained position that exists apart from the identity of the person occupying the position is incomplete" (p. 115).

Taking a similar view (to Ellis and Fisher) with regard to a definition and conceptualization of a "role," Biddle (1979) claims that a better alternative would be to view a role as "behaviors characteristic of one or more persons in a context" (p. 393). Biddle goes on to delineate the implications of his definition, claiming that roles are behavioral and involve "only those overt actions or performances that may be observed and that characterize the persons observed" (p. 58). Roles are also distinctly human in nature; they are manifested by human beings. Roles also occur in a context and are limited by contextual specifications: "Some roles are defined contextually; others are limited in their applicability by contextual boundaries" (p. 58). What is appropriate behavior in a certain context may not be so in another.

And finally, roles are behaviors *characteristic* of a person or persons; that is, roles consist of the "modal characteristics" (modal behaviors) defining a role category for a particular person or persons. For example,

It might be characteristic of one set of persons that they smoke a great deal or of another that they smoke a moderate amount. Each would be judged characteristic if we could validate these statements by appropriate behavioral observation. In contrast, those behaviors not characteristic of the persons and context studied do not form part of their role. (Biddle, 1979, p. 59)

Biddle's conceptualization of role is quite useful with a few exceptions. Although I have no basic disagreement with Biddle's first two implications, his third and fourth implications are in need

of refinement. First, Biddle's claim that roles are contextually specified, although true, is only a half-truth. From the communication perspective I will take, as well as a structuration perspective (to be discussed later), contexts come to exist, to a great extent, through interaction; they are interactionally created. Thus contexts, existing wholly prior to behavior—in Biddle's view—in and of themselves, are restricted or bounded in the extent to which they limit behavior (roles). The context in which interaction occurs "is in some degree shaped and organised as an integral part of that interaction as a communicative encounter" (Giddens, 1979, p. 83). Because contexts are to a great extent interactionally created and negotiated by group members throughout the life of the group, they have an effect on behavior insofar as previous interaction and personal experience have an impact on present interaction (interaction is reflexively monitored by group members) to form like or similar environments in which groups operate. This production and reproduction of "context" via interaction serve to constrain, condition, and limit behavior.

Poole, Seibold, and McPhee (1985) elucidate the same line of thinking in their discussion of the impact of exogenous factors (what I have termed *prior conditions*—such as context) on decision-making activity in the small group:

Thus far we have not considered conditions the group faces "from the outside"—environmental constraints or tasks—as influences on decisional structuration. It is clear, however, that exogenous factors are critical in the life of any group. The term "exogenous factors" is perhaps misleading, because it denotes influence which exist prior to and outside of interaction. Such conditions can never be simply "imposed" on a group. Rather, the group's view of factors such as the nature of the group task, the membership and size of the group, and so forth are negotiated over time within the group in light of its interpretation and outside influences. (p. 88)

Biddle's (1979) next implication, that roles are to be viewed as the modal behaviors of a person or group of persons, is in need of amplification. Because "characteristic behaviors" occur in space and time, what may be termed characteristic of a person or group of persons during any reference point of time and space may not be so at another. These reference points could be any divisions or units

in time that the researcher desires to make during a single meeting of a group, or over the life of the group, and the location in which the group meets.

Modal behaviors may change as time and space change. In Giddens's (1984) view, group members may be said to be *positioned* interactionally relative to one another in time-space or locales. The term *positioning* rather than *position* better describes the dynamic and fluid nature of role formation and development.

Summary

I have presented and criticized three different orientations regarding the concept of role. Although each perspective has its utility, depending on the questions a researcher seeks to answer, I believe that Biddle's (1979) view of roles has the greatest utility for communication scholars. With little extension, it emphasizes the role of interaction in the positioning of individuals and thus the ever-changing nature of roles, particularly in the small group. It is the perspective I will take in the sections that follow.

TYPES OF ROLES

Benne and Sheats (1948) provide a fairly comprehensive (see Mudrack & Farrell, 1995) list of the types of modal behaviors that may be exhibited by a person, or group of persons, in the small group setting. Their category system of roles is divided along three major dimensions. Group members exhibit behavior that is related to (a) accomplishing the group task (behaviors that function in the "facilitation and coordination of group problem-solving activities" [Benne & Sheats, 1948, p. 43]), (b) building and maintaining the group (behaviors that function to build "group-centered attitudes and orientation among the members of a group or the maintenance and perpetuation of such group centered behavior" [p. 44]), or (c) satisfying members' individual needs (behaviors that satisfy individual needs and are "irrelevant to the group task and which are non-oriented or negatively oriented to group building and maintenance" [p. 45]). Within each of these dimensions are a number of

categories specifying the roles enacted by members. Among these are the initiator or contributor, recorder (both task roles), encourager, harmonizer (both group building), playboy, and aggressor (both individual).

The need to perform task and maintenance behaviors that facilitate the overall functioning of the group has been acknowledged (e.g., Ellis & Fisher, 1994; Parsons & Bales, 1955). Indeed, some authors have claimed that all group behavior may be situated in either of these two dimensions (e.g., Bales & Slater, 1955). The individual roles identified by Benne and Sheats (1948), however, are not necessarily to be placed on an entirely different dimension but rather may be conceptualized as opposite ends along the task or maintenance dimensions.

A closer examination of these individual roles reveals that they may be considered disruptive to the group along the group-building or maintenance dimension (as the authors note). This notion may be expanded to consider some of the individual roles disruptive to the group, primarily with regard to maintaining and building the group, and others disruptive primarily with regard to the task dimension. That is, individual roles may be subsumed by task and maintenance dimensions and placed at the end of a continuum denoting *process-hindering roles* (in either the task or maintenance dimensions), whereas the roles identified by Benne and Sheats (1948) for the same dimensions may be placed at the other end of the continuum denoting *process-facilitating roles*.

Specifically, on the basis of the dimension (task or maintenance) to which individual roles may be primarily disruptive, the blocker, dominator, and special interest seeker are individual roles that are primarily disruptive to the task dimension, whereas the aggressor, recognition seeker, self-confessor, playboy, and help seeker are individual roles that are primarily disruptive to the maintenance dimension. Domineering (dominator) and blocking (blocker) behavior may be detrimental to the accomplishment of the group's task if it is perceived as behavior that does not allow for input of different ideas and resources. It then occupies a space on the negative behavior end (process-hindering role) on the task dimension continuum. Similarly, people who speak for special groups or

interests may be seen as detracting from the overall pursuit of accomplishment of the group's task.

On the basis of this reclassification, two major dimensions of behavior in the small group emerge: task behavior and group-building or maintenance behavior. These two dimensions of behavior are congruent with Bales and Slater's (1955) analysis of the development of roles in the small group, as well as many other studies that have examined the behavior of group members (e.g., Burke, 1967; Ellis & Fisher, 1994; Rees & Segal, 1984; see also Bormann, 1990, p. 161).

These two dimensions of behavior were originally conceptualized by Bales (1953) and Bales and Slater (1955) to be dependent dimensions. Originally working with leaders of small groups, they found that people who were rated by group members as expressive leaders (focusing on the maintenance dimension) were not rated as instrumental (focusing on the task dimension) leaders. Bales and Slater theorized that the two dimensions must be related in such a way that specializing in one type of behavior meant sacrificing specialization in the other type.

Other research, however, has questioned this role differentiation hypothesis. The differentiation hypothesis stressed the incompatibility of instrumental and expressive leadership roles being performed by the same person. The trend has been toward an integrated hypothesis in which the two types of behavior are manifested by the same person (see Lewis, 1972). Indeed, Borgatta, Couch, and Bales's (1954) research found that groups that contained " 'great men,' that is, group members who scored highest on both instrumental and expressive measures, had higher productivity and lower tension levels than groups that did not contain great men" (quoted in Rees & Segal, 1984, p. 111).

Further evidence for the independence of these two dimensions comes from the literature examining sex differences in behavior in the small group. This literature makes a nice analog to the types of behaviors previously discussed. Traditionally, women have been presumed to perform expressive behaviors and men instrumental behaviors. Research conducted in the early 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, for the most part, seems to have substantiated this stereotype. How-

ever, research conducted since that time often has substantiated, contradicted, or simply not found support for these traditional conceptions of male and female behavior (see Baird, 1976; Wood, 1987).

Salazar (1989) has offered an explanatory framework in accounting for these findings. Specifically, his argument focuses on applying Bem's (1974) concept of psychological androgyny to the behavioral realm. Although a person, male or female, may be psychologically inclined to perform expressive or instrumental types of behaviors (female expressive, male instrumental = sex role typed; female instrumental, male expressive = sex role reversal), an androgynous person (male or female) is inclined to perform both types of behaviors, depending on the functional demands of the situation.

Research using Bem's (1974) androgyny construct has been conducted in a variety of settings, particularly in the small group. Correlations between the masculine (analogous to the instrumental or task dimension) and feminine (analogous to the maintenance or expressive dimension) *psychological* orientations measured using the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) range from .11 to -.14, acknowledging the relative independence of these factors. They are free to vary independently of each other. Because this research has similarities to research on role development, I believe support is given to the relative independence of task and group-building or maintenance dimensions of behavior as well.

RIGID CATEGORIES

If behavior in the small group is to be classified along these two dimensions, one may ask whether Benne and Sheats's (1948) typology is adequate for conceptualizing and classifying such behavior into roles. I believe not, for two reasons. First, as Bormann (1990) claims,

People act in extremely complex ways and no static labeling of one or two salient role functions for each member can do justice to human behavior in a small group. What is required is a concept that sees each role as a dynamic set of expectations and behaviors that are part of a complex communication system. (p. 169)

A categorization system such as Benne and Sheats's is too rigid to capture the fluidity and complexity of human behavior.

Second, to relegate human behaviors to such categories imposes a labeling process that is much too restrictive with regard to the behaviors to be exhibited at another point in time-space. For example, when a person is labeled a *dominator*, people come to expect dominating behavior from that individual. If the individual attempts to deviate from this "prescription," sanctions may result. The individual is being "socialized" into adopting a role.

This labeling process builds connotations of socialization (by the group) of the individual. The role is now equivalent to a position existing prior to the individual and with which comes normative expectations. The role is something into which the individual is socialized; it is not necessarily something the individual forms and changes interactionally with others. According to Goffman (1969), "In entering the position, the incumbent finds that he must take on a whole array of action encompassed by the corresponding role, so role implies a social determinism, and a doctrine about socialization" (quoted in Giddens, 1979, p. 116). What is needed, then, is a system capable of capturing the complexity of human action and the impact the individual has on determining his or her role in the small group. The next section will focus on the development of such a framework.

A MODEL

POSITIONING THE SUBJECT IN BEHAVIORAL ROLE SPACE

A two-dimensional behavioral role space can now be conceptualized. The dimensions are task and group-building or maintenance behaviors. A person may be situated at any point in this behavioral role space, depending on the behaviors performed by the individual in conjunction with the behaviors of others in the small group. An individual's behavior along these two dimensions may be measured in terms of frequency of performance (how often a particular person exhibited task or group-building behavior), proportion of total

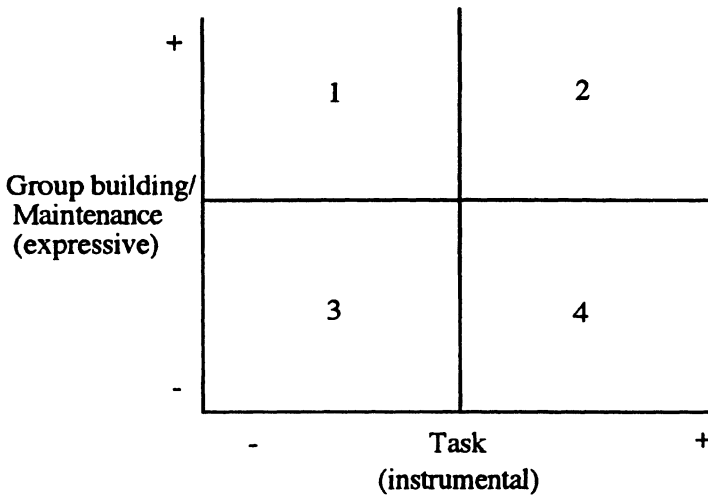


Figure 1: Positioning of Group Members in Role Space

behavior, or, in some instances, the quality of performance (how disruptive a particular individual's behavior was to accomplishing the group's task or to maintaining the group). The frequency, proportion, or the quality of the performance of these behaviors makes up the role of any given actor in the small group. An individual may be positioned at any point in two-dimensional behavioral role space, as shown in Figure 1.

The plus and minus signs at the ends of each axis represent greater or less frequency or proportion of the performance of each type of behavior or greater or less quality of performance of those behaviors. The space has been divided into four quadrants, and, borrowing from Bem's (1974) work on androgyny, a person's behavior (if using the frequency criterion) may be "typed," depending on which of these quadrants it falls into. Persons whose behaviors primarily fall in Quadrant 1 may be said to be group building or maintenance oriented, people whose behaviors primarily fall in Quadrant 2 may be said to be differentiated, people whose behaviors fall primarily in Quadrant 3 may be said to be undifferentiated,

and persons whose behaviors primarily fall in Quadrant 4 may be said to be task oriented.

This two-dimensional scheme is able to more fully capture the fluid nature of human action than the scheme identified by Benne and Sheats (1948). Further, although a person may be "typed" or labeled (and thus be expected to perform the behaviors required of that label or position), such typing permits a greater range of behavior than the rigid, more narrowly defined categories of Benne and Sheats.

In the next section, I will introduce an explanatory framework for delineating how actors become positioned in behavioral role space. The construction of the framework is informed by Poole et al.'s (1985; Poole & DeSanctis, 1992; Poole, Seibold, & McPhee, 1986) analog of Giddens's (1979, 1984) structuration theory and Bormann's (1990) analysis of the development of roles in the small group.

A STRUCTURATION TERMINOLOGY

As a formal theory, structuration grows primarily out of the work of Anthony Giddens (1984) and has been extended by Poole and his colleagues (Poole, 1992; Poole et al., 1985, 1986) to the small group setting. Structuration refers to the "process of production and reproduction of social systems via the application of generative rules and resources" (Poole et al., 1985, p. 75). A structural approach to studying human behavior in the group setting involves the production and reproduction of regulative rules and resources at the microlevel.

Because the theory has been explicated in depth elsewhere (Giddens, 1984; Poole et al., 1985, 1986), I will give it cursory treatment here, and in the discussion that follows I will emphasize the terminology of the theory pertinent to the issues involved in this investigation.

As an explanatory framework, structuration theory attempts to account for the presence of observable patterns of behavior that are termed *social practices*. Examples of social practices include religious ceremonies, conversations, and the like (Poole et al., 1986). In

accounting for these social practices (patterns of interaction), the theory acknowledges the role of individual and structural (system) factors. "No one would deny that interaction is conducted by individual members, each with particular predispositions and skills, who operate subject to structural features—norms, decision rules, communication networks—which are system level properties" (Poole et al., 1986, p. 241).

Implicit in this definition of structuration is a "distinction between system and structure. Structures refer to the rules and resources people use in interaction. Systems are the outcomes of the application of structures" (Poole et al., 1986, p. 76). People draw on institutionally embedded structures (rules, norms) in their production and reproduction of patterned behavior (systems, social practices).

An important concept in structuration is the duality of structure; that is, structures are at once the medium and the outcome of interaction. "They are its medium because structures provide the rules and resources people must draw on to interact meaningfully. They are its outcome because rules and resources only exist through being applied and acknowledged in interaction—they have no independent reality of the social practices they constitute" (Poole et al., 1985, p. 76). Violation of the rules that constitute the structures may bring sanctions on the violator (Giddens, 1984).

In drawing from social structures, which are embedded in social institutions, people produce and reproduce those structures in interaction. People drawing on institutionally embedded rules and resources produce and reproduce social practices. Social practices (as patterned interaction) exist because of the application of those rules and resources. By the same token, rules and resources exist because they are applied in interaction.

THE DEVELOPMENT AND EVOLUTION OF ROLES IN THE SMALL GROUP

In conducting discussion and interacting, group members appropriate structures. From where do these structures come? There are two possible origins of structures (Poole, 1992). First, group members may appropriate structures that are institutionally embedded.

For example, groups proceed with decision-making activity using a majority wins rule. A majority wins rule supplies members with particular procedures regarding how to go about arriving at a group decision. Majority wins, as a decision rule (contrasted with other decision rules, such as an authoritarian procedure), is embedded in an institution we call "democracy." Similarly, group members may appropriate expressive, instrumental, or androgynous structures in behaving or communicating with others in the small group.

In both cases, group members appropriate preexisting structures. These structures have been created by social groups, and individuals are exposed to them. On the basis of experience, members appropriate these structures in interaction. Alternatively, groups may develop their own unique structure. That is, they develop their own rules and resources. They create new and unique ways of proceeding or behaving and give value to what is to count as a resource. If these unique ways of behaving and valuation continue, the group comes to form its own structures. Further, these structures are perpetuated as long as they continue to be appropriated in interaction. The development of new group structures may sometimes occur whenever groups are faced with new and novel situations and really do not have a template or recipe for proceeding. These structures may be different from those appropriated from other social groups, or they may be similar to those of other social groups but new to the particular group.

When they enter the small group setting, individuals have a general notion about how to conduct discussion; that is, they draw on structures to guide interaction. However, only a range of structures is available to group members. Poole and DeSanctis (1992) have termed this *structure set* as the group's structural potential. It describes the range of structures available to group members. From this set, members appropriate structures as they carry on discussions and interact with others.

A variety of contextual features influences the structures that are actually available to group members. The nature of the group's task (e.g., a problem-solving vs. a decision-making task; mechanical vs. relational), for example, influences the types of communication behaviors required for successful task completion. Similarly, the

decision-making format (e.g., nominal vs. delphi), the technology being employed by the group (e.g., computer decision support systems vs. personal expertise), group composition (e.g., gender), group relations (e.g., cohesion), and previous interaction are factors that influence the potential structures available to group members.

From a structuration perspective, then, there are several implications for examining the development of group roles. First, group members become positioned in *role space* through interaction. According to Ellis and Fisher (1994),

Thus each member (together with the other group members) works out his or her role through performing communicative behaviors. Each member's role, along with that role's relationships with the roles of other members, must be defined principally in terms of the behaviors performed by that member in combination with fellow group members. (p. 116)

Members of the small group "exist only as being constituted as agents (coherent centers of experience, capable of action) in interaction" (Poole et al., 1985, p. 90).

The second implication is that, if conceived as structures, people draw on task and group-building or maintenance dimensions to guide interaction. At the same time, however, these structures exist because of their application in interaction. They are produced and reproduced in interaction. A *differentiated*-typed person draws on both these structures, depending on the demands of the situation. A *group-building or maintenance* person draws primarily on the expressive structure. A *task*-typed person draws primarily on the instrumental structure. And an *undifferentiated* person does not draw on any of these structures to any great degree. As long as people draw on these structures to guide and enact behavior, they will persist and the person becomes (behaviorally) situated or positioned. This, then, constitutes the locus of role: *a modal, behaviorally situated position in both task and group-building or maintenance dimensions in time-space*.

In the small group, structures both enable and constrain behavior: They inform members about the behavior that is expected, how to proceed, and what is acceptable and appropriate behavior. Group members deviating from the expected behavior may receive

sanctions so that they will comply. For example, group members enter the small group setting with a trait framework. Bormann (1990) describes this framework as a stereotype about the ways people are supposed to behave in the small group. This stereotype may be formed on the basis of previously observed personality characteristics. I shall broaden his definition to include stereotypes based on age, race, color of skin, sex, and previously observed behavior (with regard to a specific person). As such, structures based on these ascriptive characteristics inform the expectations held by group members regarding their behavior and the behavior of others.

These expectations are held by the focal person as well as the other group members and are assumed to be weighted; that is, some expectations, like attitudes, are held with greater strength than others. Group members have expectations about the behavior to be performed by the focal person, and the focal person also has expectations of his or her behavior. The primary way in which members' expectations influence the ultimate behavior of the focal person is through the impact those expectations have on the type of reinforcement or feedback given.

A person's behavior is then enabled and conditioned by the structures he or she draws on. These structures influence expectations of behavior on the part of the focal person and other group members. Once behavior is made manifest by the focal person, he or she receives reinforcement from the other group members. That reinforcement may be positive or negative in nature. To the extent the reinforcement is positive, the behavior is more likely to continue. Further, because the behavior continues, it becomes patterned and serves to perpetuate the structure enabling it.

If the reinforcement received from others is negative, the behavior is likely to be extinguished, or the behavior continues. In the face of negative reinforcement, one might ask why the behavior would ever continue. The answer can be found in the microstructural implications of interaction. Poole et al. (1985) explain their hypotheses concerning the microstructuration of roles in the small group:

The first hypothesis is that comments have microstructural implications. Specifically, we anticipate that certain comments determine

the focus of discussion, the flow of speaker succession and comment direction, and the probability of compliance for several comments after the determining one. Thus, if someone provides information about a certain topic, the chances are that he or she will be treated as an "expert" on that topic, will be asked questions about the information, and will be heeded relatively more frequently for a short time following the information giving statement.

If this hypothesis holds, then collateral hypotheses will deserve close attention. One is that microstructural implications change as group structure emerges. For instance, as one member assumes the role of task leader, his/her comments constrain and/or determine later comments more than those of other members. . . . Second, microstructural implications may "add up" to create group structure: the "interaction role" may be the just microstructural implications of his or her earliest comments in the interaction. (pp. 90-91)

Thus a person initially receiving negative reinforcement for performing a certain behavior may continue performing that behavior with the proviso that he or she perform in a way that conveys value to the group. That is, the behavior must have utility to the group and be perceived as such (it must outweigh any expectations, on the part of group members, derived from the trait framework), for behavior that had previously received negative reinforcement to continue. If that behavior is not perceived as having utility, the person will continue to receive negative reinforcement, and the behavior probably will be extinguished eventually.

If the behavior (e.g., providing information) is seen as being a valued resource in the group, it has utility. The behavior receives positive reinforcement and will likely continue. It then becomes patterned and serves to build structure that will enable and condition future interaction. A graphic depiction of this model of role development and evolution is presented in Figure 2.

AN EXTENDED EXAMPLE

An application of this framework can be made with the statement with which I began this article. I hope it will help clarify the proposed framework.

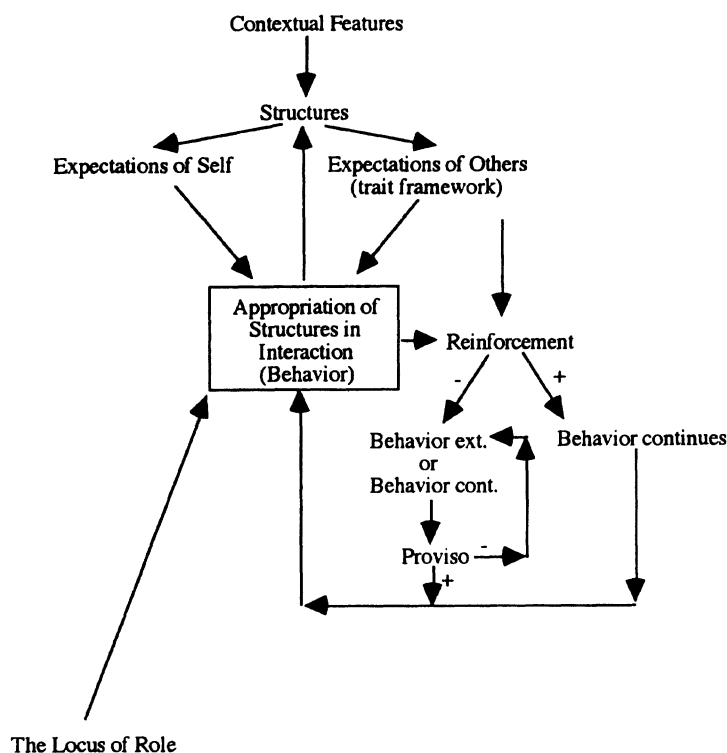


Figure 2: A Model of the Development and Evolution of Roles in the Small Group

The idea that men and women are to perform different duties is a deeply rooted one. One finds examples of this belief in the Bible as well as in many popular (and not so popular) magazines. As has been noted, it was thought (and still is thought, by many) that there is a natural division of labor between the sexes and that some duties or behaviors are naturally supposed to be performed by men, and others are just as naturally to be performed by women.

This belief seems rooted, according to Parsons and Bales (1955), in "the historically predominant social structure of families in Western European and North American culture, [which] has led to the expectation that men should have the primary authority for

instrumental or task related activities and women should be primarily available to meet social emotional needs" (quoted in Morrison & Stein, 1984, p. 8). This belief was made all too clear in Senator Brown's speech before Congress in 1887, quoted at the beginning of this article.

This belief also has been made manifest in the small group setting. Wood (1987), in her meta-analytic review of sex differences and group performance, concluded that groups composed entirely of males tend to produce better-quality products than all-female groups. She concluded that this result is probably "due to task contents or settings that favored men's interests and abilities over women's. . . . On tasks requiring positive interpersonal activity, the interaction style of all-female groups appeared to enhance performance more than did that of all-male groups" (p. 68). To the extent that most group task requirements favor men's interaction styles (task oriented, assertive, etc.) over those of women (conforming, less assertive, etc.), all-male groups typically outperform all-female groups.

Other investigations, however, have failed to confirm these traditional interaction styles of males and females, even when groups are working on "sex-specific" tasks. Although concluding that the extant literature up to that point in time generally did support a sex role theory of behavior (i.e., differences in behavior patterns on the basis of biological sex), Baird (1976) acknowledged the importance of sex role prescriptions in accounting for the differences in male and female interaction patterns. And, "given current changes in societal conceptions of the female role, these behavioral patterns may be changing" (Baird, 1976, p. 192).

The results of later studies investigating differences in male-female behaviors, especially in the small group setting, seem to substantiate Baird's assessment. With regard to effects on process, Nemeth, Endicott, and Wachtler (1976), for example, did not find differences between male and female group members on "(1) the frequency of positive social emotional acts (friendliness, dramatization, and agreement), (2) the frequency of negative social emotional acts (disagreement, showing tension, and unfriendliness), (3) the frequency of questions asking for task oriented statements (suggestions, opinions, and information)" (quoted in Mabry, 1985,

p. 76). Mabry's (1985) investigation of the effects of gender composition and task structure on small group interaction concluded that the results obtained in the study were "not strongly supportive of gender-typed small group communication behavior following as a consequence of group composition" (p. 93).

Dabbs and Ruback (1984) found that females talked significantly more than males. Simultaneous speech was also higher for females than for males, and the ratings of groups were more positive for females. In addition, subjects who talked more were rated more positively. The behaviors and ratings of females in this study do not seem to fit the traditional female stereotype. Although talking more has been seen as a traditionally male attribute (Borisoff & Merrill, 1985), women, in this study, talked more than men and were not rated negatively for doing so.

More interesting are the results of studies that report a difference in the interaction patterns of males and females, which is completely contradictory to traditional sex role prescriptions; that is, females perform behaviors that should be typical of male group members and vice-versa. Markel, Long, and Saine (1976), for example, found that the average duration of speech acts was longer for females than for males. This, in addition to other findings, led the authors to conclude that they had evidence that refuted traditional sex role prescriptions typifying the male as dominant in mixed-sex interaction.

Other researchers (e.g., Kerr & Sullaway, 1983; Morrison & Stein, 1984; Wilson & Gallois, 1985) have obtained similar results but have not been so quick to point out the inadequacies of traditional conceptions of male and female roles in interaction. Instead of indicting the traditional conceptions, these authors have provided a number of other reasons as to why their hypotheses were not supported.

So it appears that the time has come to evaluate our conceptions of prescriptions attached to any ascriptive characteristic, especially sex. What is considered to be communicative behavior typical of men and women is changing. "Many of the accepted differences . . . based upon research of the 1950s and early 1960s may be outdated, while other differences may be emerging" (Markel et al., 1976,

p. 356). The implication is that scholars relying on the research of the past to guide their investigations of differences in interaction patterns on the basis of sex are left with the task of reconciling research results that do not meet their expectations. All too often, however, that reconciliation is in a manner that is hesitant of indicting traditional sex role prescriptions as inaccurate or at least nongeneralizable. This practice is particularly dangerous because it tends to perpetuate a stereotype that limits the range of human experience (as well as perception) and creates a status hierarchy on the basis of biological sex (Pearson, 1985).

Moreover, that hesitation may serve to "blind" researchers into believing that the traditional sex role prescription is operative when in fact it may not be. Different races, ethnic groups, and cultures may have varying prescriptions that are not consistent with those adopted by "Western culture." Or it might be that Western culture's "prescriptions" have changed or are changing.

Thus it also appears that any application of the traditional sex role prescription with an attempt at gaining an understanding of group process across situations and contexts would be an exercise in futility. Markel et al. (1976) explain that a monumental task for researchers examining sex role prescriptions and behavior in small groups is "making sense out of a legacy of experimental research which both supports and contests the notion that males in our society are more dominant, assertive, and aggressive communicators than are females" (p. 356). In other words, investigators must now devote time and effort in explicating the seemingly contradictory findings of past research.

An explanation that may account for the inconsistencies of past research and the recent trend of nonsignificant findings, or evidence for reversed role prescriptions in the communicative behavior of males and females in small groups, lies in the conceiving of *role* as a social practice. That is, roles are produced and reproduced by group members through the application of rules and resources available to them.

The following example is a representation of the dynamics that have and currently do take place to change the structures underlying the production of behavior in the small group setting. Although the

example focuses on sex, it may be equally true of any other characteristic around which people form their trait framework.

At any particular time and place, a female joins an all-male decision-making group in which the men expect the woman to perform group-building or expressive behaviors. The female's expectations, however, are quite different. She is intent on performing behavior that is conducive to accomplishing the group's task (task behaviors)—behaviors that are not congruent with the expectations of the male members. At this particular point, the decision-making task and the gender composition of the group are contextual features that serve to influence the structures available to the group. These structures are statements of the expectations of behavior.

The female then draws on structures to perform a behavior. She then may examine what kind of reinforcement she receives (positive or negative) and make an assumption about the males' expectations on the basis of that reinforcement or feedback. Note that although the female is drawing on an task or instrumental structure to perform behavior, the males are drawing on a group-building or expressive structure with regard to their expectations about female behavior.

The weight with which the males' expectations are held will directly influence their reinforcement (positive or negative) of the female's behavior. It may be that the expectations are not held with any great strength, in which case the reinforcement may not be either positive or negative or, at any rate, not negative. If the female's behavior exceeds a threshold level in the strength with which these expectations are held, negative reinforcement will result from this particular group of men.

It is assumed, in this example, that reinforcement will be negative. This being the case, the female will either discontinue or continue the performance of her (task) behavior. If she is to continue her behavior, some strategy must be tried to overcome the weight with which the expectations are held. That is, the female must provide the male members with reasons that she should be allowed to produce instrumental behavior or provide evidence that the behavior is in some way of use to the group. Bradley (1980), for example, showed that a woman's display of "competence" (a valued re-

source) was enough to wipe out any status differences on the basis of sex.

With the proviso that the "giving of reasons," or the behavior having "utility" to the group, is enough to overcome the strength with which the expectations are held, the female's (task) behavior will receive positive reinforcement and will continue. As patterned behavior, the social practice serves to create a different structure for the group: that females also may perform task or instrumental behaviors. Both the male and female members of the group may draw on this structure in guiding future interactions.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE SMALL GROUP RESEARCH

It is possible to conceive of a configuration of roles for any group. Different members will fall in different points in behavioral role space. One question that future research may ask is, Which configuration is optimal for producing high-quality decisions? It may be, as Borgatta et al. (1954) showed, that a group needs only one member (the group's leader) falling in the differentiated area to facilitate quality problem solving and decision making.

Another related direction that future research might fruitfully take is to focus on the different types of tasks, examining which types of leaders (or group role configurations) are more suited to facilitate quality performance (in terms of outcome) on different types of tasks. McGrath (1984), Steiner (1972), and Laughlin (1980) have offered different typologies of task types. Matching a leader's place in behavioral space to the type of task to facilitate quality outcomes would be a fruitful endeavor.

Further research also might be conducted to determine the effects of different strategies in overcoming expectations and changing the group's structure. "Showing competence" has been demonstrated as a possible route to take. Identifying other such strategies and the different strategies that are used at different communication levels (i.e., task and communication work, first- and second-order feedback [Mills, 1990]) would be useful for anyone attempting to

change a group's structure. Along these same lines, questions concerning the number of people whose expectations have to change to achieve a change in group structure need to be answered. One question that needs to be asked is, Do all members have to change their expectations, or is it only the most powerful person's expectations that have to be changed to achieve change (or trigger a change) in group structure?

In addition, a substantial amount of work done in clinical psychology may be quite informative for group communication or interaction research within the proposed framework. Results of research examining first- and second-order change, as well as the importance of emotional feedback and projection, may have implications for assessing (a) when a change in structure actually has occurred (implying second-order change), (b) when change is merely symbolic and does not imply underlying structural change (implying first-order change), (c) the importance of emotional feedback in facilitating change in structure, and (d) how roles are mutually and interactively projected and worked out among group members (see, e.g., Dowd & Pace, 1989; Gemmill & Schaible, 1991; Pine & Jacobs, 1991). These, then, are among the questions that may be asked and the areas that may be explored by using the proposed framework in future small group research.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this article I have tried to emphasize the dynamic nature of group roles. Previous attempts to define and conceptualize the role concept have been too static to capture the complexity of human behavior. A more flexible framework has been proposed that will allow small group researchers gain a more thorough understanding of the development and evolution of roles. It is my hope that the framework will establish the belief that roles develop interactionally. Roles are also a product of expectations (of self and others' expectations of self) and a mechanism for the production and reproduction of structure.

Realizing that an individual is not merely socialized into adopting a role that society (or a small group) has set aside for a person, but that the individual's role is interactionally constituted with those he or she has contact with, allows for the possibility that there is not a natural division of labor between the sexes or a set of duties to be performed on the basis of any other characteristic. Such an orientation helps us explain the changes that have taken place since Joseph Brown's era.

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