

Roles

by Sophia Tutorial



WHAT'S COVERED

This tutorial will cover the topic of roles, through the definition and discussion of:

1. Roles and Role Sets
2. Role Conflict and Role Strain
3. Role Exit

1. ROLES AND ROLE SETS

Many people confuse the concepts of roles and statuses, but these ideas are distinct. Statuses are occupied positions. They are positions in the social structure--such as teacher, doctor, or father--that are filled, or occupied, by people.

Roles, on the other hand, are duties or functions that correspond to each of the statuses that people occupy. Roles are the behaviors, duties, and responsibilities expected of a particular status.



HINT

Statuses are occupied and roles are performed.

IN CONTEXT

Consider the status of a teacher. As a teacher, you would have multiple roles at the same time that flow from this status. You have to prepare for lectures in order to perform competently, so therefore preparation and lecturing are two of your roles as a teacher. In addition to these two roles, you need to have a good office demeanor with your coworkers, because there's a certain level of congeniality expected at the office, so you need to bring a positive attitude with you to the office everyday. This is another role of the status of a teacher.

As you can see, every status has roles that go with it. Mother, wife, father, son, brother, doctor, lawyer, etc.--all of these statuses have a **role set** that accompany them. People's lives are organized around those roles.



BRAINSTORM

Make a list of all the statuses that you occupy and the roles you think you have to perform by virtue of occupying those statuses.



TERMS TO KNOW

Roles

The behaviors, duties, and responsibilities expected of particular statuses.

Role Set

All of the multiple roles associated with a particular status.

2. ROLE CONFLICT AND ROLE STRAIN

Virtually all of people's time gets filled up with the fulfilling of roles and duties in response to the statuses that they have. Anytime you're not sleeping, you're caring about these roles in response to the statuses that you have in life. Because so much time is spent doing the duties and roles of people's statuses, this can cause a lot of conflict in their lives.



THINK ABOUT IT

Have you ever felt that you don't have time for yourself or even time to be a person? That you're wanted everywhere for something, by someone, all of the time? You might be feeling what is called **role conflict**, which is conflict among various roles from different statuses.

It's difficult being a mother, worker, student, daughter, wife or girlfriend, all at the same time. These are many different statuses and they each have a nested set of different roles. To balance them all the time is quite difficult, which is role conflict. It's a very familiar adult feeling.

IN CONTEXT

Suppose you are stressed out due to an upcoming exam, so you are consumed by performing your student roles, and in addition, you have to go work another job in the evening. All day long, you're performing both of these roles, and your father calls you--probably about nothing important, but yet he calls you two or three times.

You may say to yourself, "Dad, I don't have time to deal with this right now," because you don't have time to perform the roles of a son or daughter at that moment. In fact, you may even tell your father that you won't be able to talk to him until the weekend. In this manner, you separate everything to avoid feeling role conflict, a familiar feeling which most people experience weekly.

Similarly, you can experience stress from one single status. This is called **role strain**, which is stress and tension that result from roles of a single status, like your job. That's often a very stressful status because the roles demand a lot of you.



TERMS TO KNOW

Role Conflict

The feeling of conflict and stress when faced with juggling multiple role sets from multiple statuses.

Role Strain

Stress and tension resulting from the roles of a single status like a job status.

3. ROLE EXIT

Finally, there is the concept of **role exit**, which is when you go through a transition in life, or you leave something behind and start something new. It encompasses transitions that cause you to disengage from old roles and engage with something new.

🔗 **EXAMPLE** Basically anytime a person becomes an "ex" in life is an example of a role exit:

- A religious person who becomes an atheist
- A married person who becomes divorced
- An alcoholic who becomes sober



THINK ABOUT IT

What about if you're an alcoholic and you become sober? If you want to stay sober, you can't realistically go to all the old places you used to hang out and socialize with all your old drinking buddies, even though you might want to because you're used to fulfilling those roles.

Often, the old roles form habits and they stay with you. It's often a complicated process whenever you have to become an "ex" and engage in role exit.



TERM TO KNOW

Role Exit

A transition where a person disengages from old roles in order to start something new, becoming an "ex" and engage in role exit.



SUMMARY

Today you learned about **roles and role sets** in society and their conflicts: **role conflict**, **role strain** and **role exit**.

Source: This work is adapted from Sophia author Zach Lamb.



TERMS TO KNOW

Role Conflict

The feeling of conflict and stress when faced with juggling multiple role sets from multiple statuses.

Role Exit

A transition where a person disengages from old roles in order to start something new, becoming an "ex."

Role Set

All of the multiple roles associated with a particular status.

Role Strain

Stress and tension resulting from the roles of a single status like a job status.

Roles

The behaviors, duties, and responsibilities expected of particular statuses.