PROBLEM OF ROLE CONCDPT

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Every person in every societytholds or occupies certain positions as statuses - parent, educator etc. With every social position there are socially prescribed duties or functions to be performed, and rights to be enjoyed. These functions are called "Social roles", or just "roles".

The concept of role played an imporant part in the sociological and psychological writing. Although of its popularits, many writers were confused about it, and they stated many different meanings for it.

The problem here is concerned with the ambigu tà of the conccpt of „rolc" which lead the people to understand the "roles" with different meaning. Neiman and Hughes (9 P. 149) stated that in the literature, the concept (role) is used without any attempt on the part of the writer to define or delimit the concept,the assumption being that both the writer and the reader will achieve an immediate compatibel consensus.

As a result of the misunderstanding of the concept of "roles", various dcfinitions appeared in the writing of the sociologists and psychologists.

Purpose of the study :

1. To review a literature concerning with the meaning and definitions of the "roles".

2. Try to understand the concept of "role".

3. Find a solution for the above problem.

The method of study :

The method used has been to survey systematically the literature in some book and journal articles concerning with concept of role.

Paper outline :

The paper is devided into three chapters. The first chapter is dealing with definition and meaning of rules. The second chapter is dealing with the concept of role and the related terms. The third chapter declares the solution of the problem stated and the summary of the report.

MEANING AND DEFINITION OF ROLE.

Role or "social role" has become a familiar ter n in social psychology though there is some disagreement about its definitions.

Neiman and Hughes (9, P. 140) stated that the oncept role is at present still rather vague, nebulous, and non-definitive. Frequently in the literature the concept is used without any attempt on the part of the writor to define or delimit the concept.

Anthropologists speak of roles in describing the behavior of persons be longing to different ages, sexes, and occupational groups. Linton (11,P. 113, 114) defines role as the dynamic aspect of status. He finds seven age-sex groupings in practically all societiest: infant, boy, girl, adult man, adult woman, old man, old woman.

Some writers explained the concept of role with relation to other concepts. For examples, Bible and Mc Comos (2,P, 229) stated that the concept of role is complete without the concept consensus. Cunsensus here refers to the degree of commonality or identicalness in role perception among a specified group of role definers.

Other writers indicated (William Knoff 7,P. 1010) that status concept is fundamental to a conceptual grasp of role. Actually, status and role ore inseparable and can be taken apart only for the purpose of definition.

Bates and others (1,P. 11) have indicated that role has been used to mean a prescription for behavior, a description or an evaluation of behavior or, as being synonomous with bevaviour. This obviously presents problems when the concept is used in the literature. Each of the used obovè is different. They can be placed in three categories, Neiman and Hughes (9, PP. 141-149) stated the three categories as follows :

1. Definitions in terms of the dynamics of personality development.
2. Functional definitions in terms of sciety as a whole.
3. Functional definitions in terms of specefic groups

Miyamoto (8, P. 115) stated that the different conceptions of role may be classified as follows :

1. The cultural maintenance function of role.
5. The social interactional function of role.
3. The personal adjustmental function of role.

Definitions :

Now let us give an example of the definitions according to the bove classifications.

An example for the first part of the classification is the definition which is stated by Bater and Cloyd (1,P. 28). They stated that the role concept refers primarily to the way in which behavioral culture is organized.

An example for the second part of the classifications is used by Sargent (12.P, 360). Sargent stated that a person's role is a pattern or type of social behavior which seeme situationally appropriate to him in terms of the demands and expectations of those in the group.

An example for the third part of classification is used by Savis (6.P.90) He stated that the role is the manner in which a person actually carries out the requiremens of his position.

From the previous discussion it appeared that there are three areas for role :

1. location.
2. expectation.
3. behavior.

Location is sometimes incicated by status, sometimes by position. Expectation means either what a person may or should do, or what he will do.

Sargent (12, P, 359) stated two problems of the class ficat'on method, First, writers often recognize the influence of all three ingredients in role determination, However, in any given study there is a tendency to emphasize one or another of these factors, with important consequences for the nature of the study. *Second,* writers speak of role as serving to maintain the processes of cultural, social and personal behavior, which he speaks of as determined by these processes

ROLE CONCEPT

The concept of role is considered to be a focal concept derived in the scientific study of social life to wh'ch social scientists and psychologists are increasingly turning their attention.

Some related termst:

The terms "role playing" and "role taing" have been used to name or explain activities ranging from the process of identification to the behavior of hypnotic subjects.

Role playing is a sociological concept, refering to social functions which all people holding a particular position as status are expected to perform in overt conduct, In other words, it refers to behavior, performance, conduct, overt activity. 3, P. 180).

Role taking : The term role-taking meant, for Mead, a strictly mental or cognitive or emphatic activity, not overt behavior or conduct (3, P. 180),

The difference between role ta ing and role playing :

1. in role taking one pretends he is another person, while in role playing one does not any thing.

2. The role taking is significantly and necessarily related to social distance, whereas role playing is not.

3. Role taking concerns another's "role" (attitude, perspective) where role playing concerns one's own role (social function).

4. Role taking is primarily a communicating mechanism, whereas role playing is only indirectly so (13, P. 181).

Playing at a role : The term refers almost exlusively to certain aspects of the fantasy life of children, It refe s to the activity in which a child pretends he is, say a milkman, and in which he thinks, talks and performs like one. (13, P. 181).

Role strain : According to Goode, role strain is the felt difficult in fulfilling role obligations.

Role conflictt : Refer to the situation in which imcompatible denands are placed upon an actor (either an individual or a group) because of his role relationships with two or more groups.

According to Wilson (14 P, 27) the conflict is grouped as follows :

1. Those inherent in the role because of its diverce obligations.

2. Those which derive from the diverse expectations of those whose activities impinge on the role.

3. Those arising from circumstances in which the role is marginal.

4. Those arising from circumstances in which the role is inadequately supported by the institutional framework in which it is performed.

5. Those arising from conflict between commitments to the role and commitments to the carreer-line

6. Those arising from divergent value-commitments of the role and of the wider society,

The Roles of the Individual

The individual's first role, obviously, are those of infant and young child Helearnst to play those roles in response to the way his parents play their parental roles.

Societies differ in the variety and flexibility-that characterize the positions open o their members. Hartej (4, P. 492) stated the basic minimum of five parometers of role definition, however, obtained in most organized communities :

1. age-sex

2. occupation

3. prestige
4. family, clan, or household
5. association groups, interest groups,

Membership in each of these groups carries with it a group role as well as the specific role assigned to the individual within the group.

Saliences of a role :

Holander (5, P. 262) stated that salience fo a role refers to its prominence and/or importance in a person's life, situation. βy implication, the more salient a role the greater will be a preson's "investment" in it and its components, the more will he tend to organize his "view of things" ar und it, the more will he strive t aug ent its clarity, the more will he tend to resist change in it onece congitively origanized and hence, the more will it tend to dominate his behavior.

Definiteness of role :

It refers to the calrity and/or aritculation of elements in a differentiated role cunstruction. The clearer and more aritculated a role construction the more significant will it be as a behavior determinant. (5, P. 262)

Derviation of social roles:

Some roles seem to derive primarily from the tasks confronting the group. Other roles may develop because they are needed to support those roles already other who are filling complementary roles, though observations, by direct instruction in role requirements, and through training in the skills demanded by these requirements.

Hunt assumed that through the co plex processoes of socialization individuals develop odes for representing the panoply of positional differentiations and role patterning defining the social system in which they operate, Some of these representations they will acquire as a result of direct experience and others will develop a consequence of indirect influences.

Variation of social role :

Social role is obviously intimately related to group membership, since it is only by virtue of group me bership, that one has any social role at all. For every group membership an individual has, he must fill a corresponding social role.

Hartley (4, PP. 487-492) stated that there are different kinds of roles :

1. Group roles and individual roles.

2. Pervasive and limited roles : a pervasive role determines the other roles an individual may take and the manner in which these roles may be filled.

3. Variations in clarity of role definitions : some roles are clearly defined, others are blurred in cefinition. Some aspects of roles are definitely prescribed, others are left vague.

4. Imposed and achieved roles : As a member of a given socitey, an individual occupies some positions simply by virtue of birth. These positions may not be the ones he wishes to occupy, but ones in which he has been placed because of certain characteristics he possesses. This is what is called the imposed roles, which offer the individual little or no freedom of choice. The achieved roles are the roles which the individual may choose. These special social roles are usually assigned to people engaged in various occupations and holding memberships in certain associations.

5. Congruent and incongruent roles: The different roles of the individual in the society may be designated as a "cluster" which serves th individual as a basic organizatien of the customary adjustments he finds necessary to meet the varied demands-that liftmakes on him Some roles in the society-intergrate into clusters that are congruent. Other roles may be incongruent Sargent and Williamson (13, PP. 349-351) stated that there are certain major ways in which roles differ :

1. Roles differ in breadth or extensiveness.
2. Roles differ in specifictiy to patterning.
3. Roles vary in their continuity or per anenc.
4. Roles vary greatly in importance and pre:tige.

Functions of social roles :

Social roles furnish a basis or communication between people. They help the individual groupmember to know what to expect of other members, how to approach hem and how to communicate with them.

Social roles also functin as a means of inegrating the individual into the group in an orderly manner.

The roles make for prdictability and harmony in social behavior and thus facilitate social adjustment, they may also contribute to individual furstration, and conflict.

Consciousness of roles

Sargent and Williamson (13, P. 356) raised the following question : Are people generally aware of their role playing ?

On the whole a person seems to be unconsicous of his role playing, probably becaus he has learned so gradually and so well, what is required of one

in his position. In new and unusual circumstances, however, the situation must be interperted or defined, and the role to be taken may be consciously considered.

An individual's self-image, whether or not it is fully conscious, undoubtedly includes his conceptions of his roles.

Value of the role concept :

Roles provide a situationally oriented apprcach to personality which supplements and may help to correct the usual trait-oriented psychological approach, Sargent (13, P. 367). Much but not all social behavior has role character ; role relationships are minimal in critical situations and in new and "unstructured" social groupings.

SOLUTION

As we stated before there are three categories of the concept role.

Gross and others tried to state a solution for the problem of the definitions. They had to determine how to defin the concebts so that the concept would be meaningful theoreticaljy and empirical y or operationally. Their, objective was to develop a "role language" that may be applied to individual, cultural or social phenomena (15, P. 42).

Olser and Frank Harary (10, PP. 3-17) tried to set forth a mathematical system of term and concepts for discussing role structure. Their objective was to develop a scientific concept rather than common sense concepts.

In general we can summarize Gross' solution as follows :

First : We define the concept of role according to the classification which stated before.

Second : We should know how the concepts will be used so that they are most meaningful at both wfhe theoretical vnd empiriacl levels.

Third : The concepts should be used separately - as Gross stated. When each of the parts of zlassifization is used separately and defined specifically the problem of ambiguity disappears.

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