What are Roles?

Definition: Role

- **Role** - a set of communicative behaviors performed by an individual that involves the behaviors performed by one member in light of the expectations that the other members hold toward those behaviors (Fisher & Ellis, 1990)
- **Role** - the part you play in a group (Galanes & Brilhart, 1998)

Terminology

- **Role reversal** - when you play a very different role than you normally do
- **Role status** - the relative importance, power, or prestige associated with a particular role
- **Role conflict** - when we find ourselves playing roles in different groups which contradict each other
Types of Roles

- **Formal** (positional) roles - roles that are assigned on the basis of a member's position or title
- **Informal** (behavioral) roles - the parts people play that reflect their personality traits, habits, and behaviors in the group

Role Functions in Groups
(classification of informal roles)

- **Task roles** - roles that contribute directly to the accomplishment of the group’s task
- **Maintenance roles** - roles that help the group maintain harmonious relationships and a cohesive interpersonal climate
- **Self-centered (disruptive) roles** - roles that serve individual needs or goals while impeding attainment of group goals

Task Roles

- Initiator-Contributor
- Information Seeker
- Opinion Seeker-Consensus Tester
- Information Giver
- Clarifier-Elaborator
- Coordinator
- Secretary-Recorder
- Procedural Technician
- Director-Leader
- Devil’s Advocate
- Opinion Giver
- Evaluator-Critic
- Summarizer/Orienter
- Energizer
Maintenance Roles

- Supporter-Encourager
- Harmonizer
- Compromiser
- Tension Reliever
- Dramatizer-Storyteller
- Gatekeeper-Expediter
- Feeling Expresser
- Norm Establisher-Standard Setter
- Group Observer
- Follower

Self-Centered Roles
(aka: Individual, Disruptive)

- Stagehog-Recognition Seeker
- Dominator
- Isolate-Withdrawer
- Clown-Joker-Playboy
- Blocker
- Fighter-Controller-Aggressor
- Zealot-Special Interest Pleader
- Cynic
- Dependent-Help Seeker
- Self-Confessor

Role Emergence

- How do roles emerge in a group?
  - The individual actively seeks roles (s)he find most exciting and enjoyable and that (s)he has played successfully in other groups
  - The group's expectations create the individual's role
Key Terms

• **Role emergence** - How roles are determined (emerge) in a group
• **Group endorsement** - The group approves (or disapproves) of the role the individual has chosen
• **Role specialization** - The primary role an individual plays
• **Role fixation** - The acting out of a specific role, and that role alone, regardless of what the situation requires