

The Impact of Our Roles

Have you ever been in an environment where you feel as if you're putting on an act in front of people? Well, if you have, it is completely normal to do so. The brain takes on roles when put into different environments and when around different people. This phenomenon begins with Erving Goffman, who states that each person takes on a front stage and a backstage. The front stage is a collectively derived social situation where everyone involved has a specific part to play. The backstage are specific social situations where we, as humans, prepare for our role in the "front stage". Furthermore, our front stage behavior consists of behavior that is visible to our audience and behaviors that we want to be seen. On the other hand, backstage refers to the actions and behaviors you, the performer, take on when people aren't around and observing. Goffman believes that we can't fully be ourselves or have a sense of who we are without the act of "performing". Since we all have a role in others performances, if the roles start losing credibility then the stage will crumble.

Our front stage and backstage are essential to our social interactions, and without these roles we would not feel credible. We, as the performer, have the power to change how our role is perceived in all different environments. Furthermore, we feel pressured to present ourselves in a certain manner depending on the environment we are put into. Each and every one of us plays different roles depending on the environment, situation or event we are placed in to.

Goffman's main idea regarding the roles that we play is that these roles come from the collective consciousness. The collective consciousness is the shared beliefs, ideas and morals

take on, according to Goffman, because how we are aware of who we are is dependent on the societal experiences we are put into. Society helps us to understand who we are as people and what our role in society is, at a specific time.

Being in college, I believe and certainly feel that most everyone is performing some type of, different, role in every situation they are in. College puts thousands of students, from all over the country, and makes these students live in close quarters without knowing each other or the backstory of anyone. Due to these conditions, I believe that every student puts on a front, using their front stage, in front of these new people they are now being required to live with or nearby. Being at college and away from home, every college student is put into a new environment with people and professors they don't know. With this being said, every college student puts on a front with their roles in order to make sure other peers and professors like them. Each student prepares a different set of roles for each class in order to fit the atmosphere of that class in order for their role to feel credible. If one prepared the wrong role for a certain class, they would begin to feel embarrassed and not credible. Feeling not credible would diminish the whole idea of the role and the stage would crumble. If the stage crumbles, all roles are ruined and each role has no purpose in the performance any more.

Each different class a college student goes to requires a different role one plays. When I am in my University 101 class, I am super talkative and really engage in the class discussions because I feel extremely comfortable to talk in this class due to the fact that it is not a class where I need to know specific details about a concept. Although I am a super talkative and an engaging person in this class, when I go to different classes I act as a completely different version of myself. In each separate class that I go to, I prepare a different role in my backstage to

roles in my backstage in order to fit in to the many different class types I am enrolled in. If I were to act the same and my role be the exact same in every class, my role would not fit and not feel credible in every class type.

Not only does this phenomenon relate to what role I take on in my different class scenarios, but it also relates to when I am with friends or family. When I am with friends, I am a completely different person than with my family. My friends play a specific role in the role I am playing in front of them, which is why the role I take on in front of my family is completely different than the one my friends see. When I am around my family, I am the same person but my personality is dialed down because my family does not get me riled up as much as my friends do. When I am with my friends, they play a specific role in how I act. In my backstage, when I am with friends, I typically prepare myself to be in a good mood and be goofy because that's how we always are with each other. Although this is true, sometimes the mood is not a happy one so my role is discredited if I planned wrong in my backstage before performing my act in front of them. Furthermore, my role and their roles would not interact well if our roles were prepared two different ways in each other's backstages.

This concept also relates to when I was in high school and I played on two different softball teams; one for recreational purposes outside of my school atmosphere and one for my high school. When I would attend my high school teams practices, I felt as if I could fully be myself and everyone around me understood exactly who I was as a person and my personality entirely. On the other hand, when I would attend practices for the other softball team I was engaging in, I felt that I needed to shut myself off due to the energy my other teammates were radiating off to me. The comfortability I felt when playing and practicing with my high school

feel credible. The teammates I had around me were very invested into the role I was playing, which made me feel not only credible, but also completely comfortable in the environment I was in. Unlike my high school softball team, the teammates on my recreational team outside of the school atmosphere were not fully invested in my role. With this being said, I felt embarrassed and ashamed for not feeling credible and began to not fully play my role as they were not engaging in my role. The people around us, in any environment, are crucial to our role credibility and the feelings we get from performing said role.

This dilemma does not just affect me and the college students I am around or the family and friends I am around, but it affects everyone. My mom is another great example of this phenomenon as she works for a high-end company, Gucci, and has to act a certain way when working. In her backstage, my mom must prepare herself to be responsible and formal so she fits into the atmosphere of her work place. Her front stage must show to her co-workers and boss that she is work ready, leading to her role feeling credible. Although this is true, when my mom steps foot out of her office building, her backstage changes and her role shifts. After stepping outside of her office building, her role is no longer to be an employee at a job but instead to be a mother to two children. Her backstage must shift in this different, but not new, environment in order for her role as a mother to feel credible.

Along with the front stage and backstage, Goffman makes distinctions between the character and the performer. The character is the actual body that we are presenting to others that can be easily changed by environments, while the performer is the soul. Furthermore, our actual identity is derived from the roles we take on in different performances. Our identity is essentially constantly changing due to the fact that we take on multiple roles on a day-to-day basis. The self

we are placed in to.

Goffman explains that for the presentation of the self to be complete, one must feel credible and not embarrassed when performing their role. Embarrassment does not affect just the performer, but, instead, affects everyone involved due to everyone being invested in other's roles. "Mistaken identity" can take place when one's role is discredited and thought to be something else by the other's involved in the role. Toxic interactions happen frequently due to other's not being invested in other roles that people are performing. Online interactions expand the involvement in which one can take on new roles and identities.

Our front and backstage are essential in how we, as humans, present ourselves to the world around us. Our front stage is the actual act or performance that is given, with a specific role. Our backstage is where our front stage role is derived from and where we prepare for our performance and role. The roles one takes on is crucial to the overall credibility one feels in a certain environment. Everyone involved in the role is invested in order for the role to feel credible and safe in this environment. The collective consciousness allows for us, as humans, to feel aware of our role and the impact of our role due to the people around us at all times, in any environment we are placed in to. Being in high school and college, I especially was able to see how our role can be diminished due to our surroundings or how our role can feel credible due to the good surroundings we are around. Along with this, our roles can only feel and/or become credible through the other people who are involved in our performances. As a performer, we take on specific roles due to the environments and situations we are in, and the people we are accompanied by around us act on our roles. The experiences we have with other people are crucial to the well-being of our role in order for our role to feel credible and not embarrassed by

not perform to their abilities.