

Analysis and Design of Role Plays

A Simulation of the Role Play Design

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Materials

- ROLE cards (assign a color)
- FEELINGS cards (assign color)
- TASK cards (assign color)
- SITUATION card (assign color)

Leader prepares and shuffles cards, reads instructions to the group, and enlists the volunteers.

Stage I: Two volunteers, each draws a ROLE card; no one else is to know what card has been drawn. The role players are then to play out their roles. After a brief time (3-5 minutes), cut the action and ask for two more volunteers. Repeat Stage 1.

Debriefing: After two or three pairs of volunteers have attempted to create their role plays, ask the whole group these questions:

- What was difficult about these roles?
- What purposes were served by the role plays?
- What was missing?

Stage II: Two volunteers, each draws one ROLE card plus one FEELINGS card; no one else is to know what cards have been drawn. The role players are then to play out their roles. After a brief time, cut the action and ask for two more volunteers. Repeat Stage II.

Debriefing: Ask the entire group these questions:

- Was this series of role plays easier? Why or why not?
- What dynamic is added by the specification of feelings? How does it affect the role play?
- What is still missing?

Stage III: Two volunteers, each draws one ROLE card and one FEELINGS card. Then the leader hands a third card, a TASK card, to one of the role players. No one else is to know what cards are being held. The role players play out their roles. Repeat Stage III if time allows.

Debriefing: Ask the entire group these questions:

- What was the third card? What was its effect on the role play?
- What are the major differences between the type of role play in Stage III and in the earlier stages?

Stage IV: Two volunteers, each draws one ROLE card and one FEELINGS card. Then the leader gives them a SITUATION card to read together. The role players play out their roles. Repeat Stage IV if time allows.

Debriefing: Ask the entire group these questions:

- In what ways is the SITUATION card's function similar to that of the TASK card (as used in Stage III)?
- What is the effect of the SITUATION card? Is it more or less important than the ROLE card?
- In this role play to what extent is the FEELING card important?

- In what ways, if any, is it better for each role player to know what instruction has been given to the other?

Follow Up Exercise in the Design of a Role Play

Divide into writing teams of two persons to design a role play. Consider the following steps:

1. What is to be the educational purpose?
 To become more aware of _____
 To explore the interplay of relations between/among _____
 To explore options of response to _____
2. What “transactional dynamics” do you want to stimulate?
3. What roles will be assigned? (Consider whether or not they are possible for your target learners to accept with self-in-role perspective.)
4. What task will be set up? (And who is to be assigned the task?) Or, what situation is to be specified? Make sure the situation is one in which the motives can be appreciated by the target learners.)
5. Consider the non-role players or passive-role people who will observe the action. What task or roles can be assigned to each of them? (These assignments should be as engaging as possible, so that the people who are not central to the role play are neither diverted nor left at a purely intellectual level of involvement.)
6. Write out the assignment cards as briefly and precisely as possible. (Hint: don’t write scripts; the best role plays are free and open-ended after the initial role and task specifications.)

ROLE CARDS

You are a commercial fisherman from Maine	You are a hosiery salesperson	You are a retired longshoreman	You are a mink farmer
You are a sponge diver	You are a retired schoolteacher	You are a commercial artist	You are a police detective
You are a dishwasher at a local restaurant	You are an airline reservation agent	You are a state legislator	You are an employment counselor

FEELINGS CARDS

Sad	Happy	Conservative	Hopeless
Expectant	Liberal	Pessimistic	Optimistic
Childish	Shy	Stuffy	Honest
Dishonest	Humorous	Bouncy	Bold

TASK CARDS

Try to borrow \$1.00 but you don't tell what you need it for.	Try to find out something that the other role player doesn't want to tell you.	Try to get the other role player to help you think of the words to the second verse of the national anthem.
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SITUATION CARDS

You both are on a train. Try to make polite conversation and play out your curiosity about each other.	You both are dripping wet on a bench waiting for a bus that seems to be seriously overdue. Say something to the other.	You both are waiting for a call at the same phone booth. You've never met, yet you want to explain why you're standing on the sidewalk.	You both are looking up. You thought you saw something, yet you suspect the other role player looked up just because you were.
You are both in a dark theater. Someone just tapped your shoulder. Each of you felt it. It could have been someone playing a prank.	You are both in the supermarket check out line. You each spot something in the other role player's shopping basket that has made you curious.	You are both tied for first place in the contest. Only one of you will go to Europe for the 3-week all expense paid tour. You don't know how the tie will be broken. How do you feel about each other?	You are standing beside your cars in the parking lot. You both backed up at exactly the same moment and hit your respective bumpers with little damage.