ROLE-PLAYING AS A TECHNIQUE FOR DEVELOPING SELF-AWARENESS AND SOCIAL GROWTH IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

by

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. The objective of this study
was to investigate role-playing as a technique to develop
awareness of personal motives and of formation of more
meaningful interpersonal relationships.

The following questions were investigated:

1. Can role-playing help to solve problems which
   develop in the classroom or on the playground?

2. What are some of the techniques of role-playing,
   and how can they be most effectively used?

3. What kinds of problems can teachers attempt to
   solve with role-playing techniques?

4. How can role-playing be evaluated?

Importance of the study. In the late 1960's, America was
caught up in a period of rapid change. Society in its human
relations aspect, found itself far behind technology. Many
of the same problems as formerly were faced, but new ones appeared
to which new answers had to be developed. It was the belief
of Gerald Caplan[1] that our schools be instrumental in prepar-
ing students to handle problems and crisis effectively. He
observed that when people found no reality-oriented methods of

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[1] Gerald Caplan, "Opportunities for School Psychologists
in Primary Prevention of Mental Disorders in Children", United
States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Public
Health Service, Mental Health Monograph 5 The Protection and
Promotion of Mental Health in Schools. PP. 9-22.

coping with problems, they were forced to deal with them in some unrealistic, neurotic, or perhaps even psychotic ways.

Patterns of coping with problems emerged as individuals were observed. Mentally healthy persons developed a successful pattern of crisis solutions; the unhealthy people lacked success in dealing with crises.

Since life provides crises as an opportunity for growth as well as a danger of provoking mental disorder, schools were encouraged to provide people with the tools with which to cope with children's problems and crises. Personal contacts among students and between students and teacher help develop better skills in interpersonal relationships. Ojemman[1] was critical of present teaching methods. He believed that students were being taught to look at things with a surface approach. Children were too superficial in their thinking and saw only one solution for a problem. He suggested that methods of teaching be altered to the "casual" approach, of looking for the causes for phenomena perceived. He also believed that children should learn to choose from a range of alternative behaviors in reaction to a problem.

Caplan[2] stated: "In relation to improving a child's capacity to deal with life's problems, particular importance

[1]Ralph H. Ojemman, "Investigations on the Effects of Teaching and Understanding and Appreciation of Behavior Dynamics", in Gerald Caplan, ed., Prevention of Mental Disorders in Children, (Basic Books, 1961), pp. 378-397.

[2]Caplan, op. cit., pg. 13

is to be ascribed to training which will help him: to with-
stand frustration and anxiety; to persevere with problem-
solving in the face of difficulty; to confront his problems
actively and maintain them in consciousness despite their
unpleasantness; and to be able to ask for help and use it
without a weakening loss of self-esteem."

Role-playing as a means of providing an opportunity for
children to deal experimentally with some crises before they
were encountered was investigated. (Role-playing provided
opportunities for many alternatives to be considered, and the
chance for a teacher to make clear that there is no one right
answer to some questions, but there may be many answers.)

Implementation of developmental tasks. Havinghurst[1] de-
scribed nine developmental tasks for middle childhood. Four
of them were ones which could be implemented by role-playing
methods.

> Task three is: ..."learning to get along with age mates."
> This task was most amenable to role-playing in the class-
> room.
>
> Task seven: "Developing conscience, morality, and a
> scale of values." Role-playing aided the children in
> exploration of their system of values, though they were
> left to choose their own personal answer to the problem
> presented.
>
> Task eight: "Achieving personal independence." Reality-
> practice in making decisions about what action to take
> in a given situation certainly helps develop independence.
> This was a gentle push to independence, since they were
> given no criticism for their action, only offered alter-
> native actions.

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[1] Robert Havinghurst, Human Development and Education,
(Longmans, Green, and Co., 1953.) pp. 25-110, 287-332.

Task nine: "Developing attitudes toward social
groups and institutions." Since middle childhood
is the age when social attitudes are developed,
practice in acceptance of those of all races and
religions, respect for freedom of speech, democracy
and international cooperation were useful.

II. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Role-playing. Role-playing is an attempt to solve a pro-
blem in interpersonal relations by using a dramatic technique[1],
a living-through of experiences of common concern to the group
members.[2]

Sociodrama. Sociodrama has many definitions. Moreno[3]
defined it as "a deep action method dealing with inter-group
relations and group ideologies." It was used by him as an aid
to better cultural relations. In employing sociodrama in
schools, Jennings[4] has used it to mean the dramatic exploration
of problems common to a group but not necessarily cultural in
nature. The latter is the sense in which it was used in this
paper.

Psychodrama. The attempt to solve a personal problem,
often a very deep-seated one, by use of dramatic technique is

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[1]Mark Chesler and Robert Fox, Role-Playing Methods in the
Classroom, (Chicago: Science Research Associates, Inc., 1966),
pg. 1.

[2]Helen Hall Jennings, "Sociodrama as Educative Process,"
Fostering Mental Health in our Schools, 1950 Yearbook of the
Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
Washington, D. C., 1950. pg. 260.

[3]Jacob L. Moreno, "The Concept of Sociodrama," Sociometry,
7:434 August, 1943.

[4]Jennings, loc. cit.

called psychodrama.[1] Psychodrama has no place in the public schools, but is a theraputic instrument for use by trained specialists.

Reality Practice. Reality practice is another synonym for role-playing.

Mental Health. The condition of a person with a sound integration of himself with his activities, and with a flexibility to learn through experience, to change, and to adapt to changing conditions is mental health.[2]

Crisis. A decisive moment or turning point in a person's life is a crisis. A crisis in one person's life may not be one to another person. .

[1]Moreno, loc. cit.

[2]Gerald Caplan, "Opportunities for School Psychologists in Primary Prevention of Mental Disorders in Children," United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Public Health Service, Mental Health Monograph 5, The Protection and Promotion of Mental Health in Schools. pg. 13.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

I. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF GROUP TECHNIQUES

Role-playing was one of several of the group techniques
developed during the twentieth century. J. H. Pratt of Boston,
who worked first in 1905 with tuberculosis patients in group
psychotherapy, was thought of as the founder of the group
method. In 1908 Emerson successfully worked with a group of
undernourished children and their parents. L. C. Marsh and
Edward Lazell developed a series of lectures for patients deal-
ing with mental health. Another pioneer, Paul Schilder,
developed techniques which were more allied with traditional
analytic methods.

J. L. Moreno worked first with children and later with
mental patients using a technique which he called psychodrama.
Children acted out their fantasies, while other patients acted
out their problem situations. Later the audience participated
in discussion of the action, providing for catharsis, analysis
and insight into actions.

Recently group techniques have been influenced by the var-
ious schools of thought, psychoanalysis, Rogerian non-direc-
tive philosophy, Adlerian thought, and the group dynamics field.
Group techniques were found valuable, not only because they en-
abled a group worker to help many people at one time, but because
some problems were better treated in a group than in an
individual session.[1]

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[1]Margaret E. Bennett, Guidance and Counseling in Groups,
(New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1963), pp. 27-48.

II. PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON ROLE-PLAYING

Authors in this field found numerous reasons for using sociodrama or role-playing more extensively. Zander and Lippitt[1] list these reasons:

1. The need to bring students into closer relationship with the life situation for which they are being trained.

2. The importance of the right social setting for education and of good interpersonal relationships in the group.

3. Transmitting performance skills and creating basic attitudes.

Strang[2] saw these values in role-playing:

1. "To develop awareness of common problems in specific situations and to gain insight into common social situations.

2. To gain insight into the behavior of oneself and others; to learn to identify and 'feel with' another person . . "

3. To learn, on the basis of feeling, what kind of behavior would be appropriate in a given situation.

4. To acquire techniques of analyzing situations and meeting group problems.

5. To develop sponteneity and to give individuals a chance to try out behavior problems with no penalties for making mistakes."

Moreno[3] found several advantages of role-playing over trial and error in real life:

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[1]A. Zander and R. Lippitt, "Reality-Practice as Educational Method," _Sociometry_, 7:130, May, 1944.

[2]Ruth Strang, _Group Work in Education_, (New York: Harper & Bros., 1958) pp. 267-268.

[3]Jacob L. Moreno, _Who Shall Survive_, (Beacon, New York: Beacon House, Inc., 1953), pp. 87-88.

1. In real life people might not learn from their mistakes because they are too deeply involved in the action to see their error. In role-playing they are able to disengage themselves.

2. If the individual's main role in life is successful, this may create inertia in attemping solutions to problems in other areas.

3. Role-playing makes him more versatile and resourseful.

Several authors described methods to be followed in role-playing. First, select the issue or problem to be dramatized. The problem should be one which would concern the group, and would fulfill a need of the students. A teacher may start with actual problems of the student, but he must be sure that he focuses on the general nature of the problem, and not on personal failures of any child. Topics should not be too threatening to children.[1]

Age of the students and social background may indicate choice of subjects. Often upper and middle class children feel more comfortable in verbal situations, while lower class children are more at home in physical expression.

The second step is a warm-up. This step, as suggested by Chesler and Fox, is especially important for those who are not familiar with role-playing. The purpose is relaxation of the students. A short game of charades could be used. The follow-

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[1] Mark Chesler and Robert Fox, Role-Playing Methods in the Classroom, (Chicago: Science Research Associates, Inc., 1966), pp. 31-32.

ing are other examples of warm-up exercises:

1. "Pretend that you are walking: - through very deep
    snow. - on marbles - through fallen leaves." [1]

2. "Show how you feel when: - you get a phone call:
    someone invites you to a party."

A third step in the role-playing sequence is to explain
the situation to the children. The children should know the
purpose of the drama, and the site, characters, broad courses
of action. The actors must be informed more concretely of the
situation, and how the characters whom they are portraying feel
about the situation. A description of the character and his
feelings may be written out on a piece of paper for each actor.
The physical area and props - if any - should be laid out.

Choosing participants is the fourth step. Choosing should
be done carefully. Avoid placing a child in his normal life
role, especially if it is a threatening one to him. A child
must feel free to refuse if he does not want to participate. [1]
Jennings suggested that the teacher as director help set the
stage by asking questions regarding the location of the action,
their imagined dress, and their feelings in the situation. [2]

The final preparation before the action is to involve the
audience in the drama. The group could be given specific points
to look for, parts of the group may watch different characters,
or each child may try to identify with one of the characters.

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[1]Chesler and Fox, op. cit., pp. 33-37.

[2]Jennings, op. cit., pp. 273-274.

The role-playing action itself is next. The actors may want to plan their actions generally, and briefly. Sponteneity is lost if a rehearsal is held.

Other techniques may be used in addition to the direct dramatic presentation. Brunelle[1] lists these ideas:

1. Role reversal: If, for any reason one child does not understand another's role, their roles may be switched so that they each get insight into the other person.

2. Soliloquy: This refers to a time when a character may talk aloud to himself, reflecting on actions taken.

3. The Double: This is where one person is the conscience of the other. It is similar to the soliloquy, but the conscience would tell the character when he is not quite honest.

4. Moving from a comprehended role to a more desirable role: Place a child in a role which is opposite of that he usually takes, so that he sees that point of view, then in a role similar to his own real life. This may aid him in seeing his own role more clearly.

Chesler and Fox[2] suggested having consultants to the action. The action could be stopped periodically and the advice of the consultants sought. The consultant can help the actor to see his actions in new perspective.

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[1] Peggy Brunelle, "Action Projects from Children's Literature; an Indirect Attempt to Intercultural Relations in the Elementary School", in Robert Haas, ed., Psychodrama and Sociodrama in American Education, (New York: Beacon House, 1949.)

[2] Mark Chesler and Robert Fox, op. cit., pp. 28-31.

The discussion which follows the role-playing is one of the most important parts of the action. The actors may become part of the audience and enter into the discussion, or may remain as a panel of experts to aid the observers. They may also soliloquize about their actions.

The teacher should not act in such a way as to drive home certain learnings, but should let children come to their own conclusions about the effectiveness of the action. The class should not ridicule actions taken, only attempt to understand that many actions are possible and this is only one of them.

After discussion, it may be advantageous to replay the drama, using insights gained during the discussion.

The last step is evaluation of the role-playing. As with many educational efforts, evaluation is difficult. Assessing reactions of the students to role-playing can be the first method. A teacher can evaluate role-playing ability by keeping a continuing record of ratings by classmates of the actor's being in character. Keeping his own records of actor's ability would also aid the teacher.

Evaluation may aim at discovering ways to improve the director's ability and technique of the mechanics of role-playing.

The ultimate evaluation is, of course, behavior change in the students. One indication of behavior change is the flexibility with which children react to a situation, or the number of solutions which occur to them. Anecdotal records of

behavior changes could be kept. Observation of the partici-
pants over a number of years would be valuable to a re-
searcher, but is almost impossible for the classroom teacher.

Other sources checked, such as Shoobs[1], Zander[2], Strang[3],
Gronlund[4], Willey[5], and an C. C. Crofts publication[6], all
had very similar but less detailed descriptions of the steps
necessary to successful role-playing.

Among experimenters with role-playing was Culbertson[7].
Culbertson accepted all her hypotheses in an experiment deal-
ing with changing of an emotionally held attitude through the
use of role-playing. Role-playing experiences involved favor-
able attitudes toward integration of Negro and white housing.
Attitudes of those who participated were modified to more favor-
able attitudes toward both Negros and integrated housing.

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[1] Nahum E. Shoobs, "Psychodrama in the Schools," _Socio-
metry_, 7:152-168, May, 1944.

[2] Zander and Lippitt, _op. cit._, pp. 129-151.

[3] Ruth Strang, _Group Work in Education_, (New York: Harper
and Brothers, 1958.) pp. 267-269.

[4] Norman E. Gronlund, _Sociometry in the Classroom_, (New
York: Harper and Brothers, 1959.) pp. 259-261.

[5] Roy Willey and Melvin Strong, _Group Procedures in
Guidance_, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957.) pp. 363-366.

[6] A.C. Crofts Publ, "Role-Playing in the Classroom," in
Herman Remmers, Harry Rivlin, David Ryans, Einar Ryden ed. _Growth,
Teaching and Learnings_, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957)
pp. 25-31.

[7] Frances Culbertson, "Modification of an Emotionally Held
Attitude through Role-Playing," _Journal of Abnormal and Social
Psychology_, March, 1957, pp. 230-233.

The degree of change was more pronounced in participants than observers. The less the "authoritarian" personality of a person, the greater the change in attitude.

Webb and Chueh[1] found evidence in a similar study that both white and Negro subjects responded to a role-playing experience, but the evidence was not conclusive.

Debaters who took opposing views to what they personally believed were the subject of a study by Janis and King[2]. Active participants who played roles opposite from their beliefs changed their minds oftener than those who only read about or listened to opposing arguments. Verbalization increased the effectiveness of persuasive communication. Most change was noted when participants improvised a great deal, and when they expressed satisfaction with their own speaking performance.

The correlation aspects of child development with role-playing ability was investigated by Bowers and London[3]. They found girls and boys to be equal in role-playing ability. Behavior close to that of hypnotized subjects was noted in instances of children playing themselves in unfamiliar situations.

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[1]Sam Webb and Janet Chueh, "The Effect of Role-Taking on the Judgment of Attitudes," *Journal of Social Psychology*, April, 1965, pp. 279-292.

[2]I. L. Janis and T. T. King, "The Influence of Role Playing on Opinion Change," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psycholoty*, 1954, 49:211-218.

[3]Patricia Bowers, and Perry London, "Developmental Correlates of Role-Playing Ability," *Child Development*, June, 1965, 36:499-508.

The highest correlation was found to be between role-playing ability and I.Q. Age tended to increase role-playing ability.

The effectiveness of incentives on success in role-playing was the subject of a study by Janis and Gilmore[1]. Favorable sponsorship was much more effective than unfavorable sponsorship in getting a response from role-players. A large versus a small money payment had no appreciable effect on the amount of attitude change in the role-players.

Lippitt, Lippitt, and Fox[2] reported the continuing experiment with role-playing taking place in the schools of Ann Arbor, Michigan. They have not yet reached definite conclusions, but have these basic assumptions, which seem, at the point reported, to have been born out: ... "having children study human behavior rationally will make a significant difference in their attitudes toward their teachers and other adult authorities, in their concepts of such ideas as cooperation and competition, in their understanding of themselves, and in their appreciation of differences in others." Teachers had noted a marked decrease in traditional anti-teacher feeling, especially in disadvantaged children. Change in the direction of cooperation was also observed by teachers of the classrooms involved. The children are enthusiastic about sociodrama.

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[1] Irving L. Janis, and J. Barnard Gilmore, "The Influence of Incentive Conditions on the Success of Role-Playing in Modifying Attitudes," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1:17-27. January, 1965.

[2] Lippitt, Ronald, Peggy Lippitt, and Robert Fox, "Children Look at Their Own Behavior," National Education Association Journal, 53:14-16. September, 1964.

III. SUMMARY OF THE LITERATURE

Much of the literature on role-playing dealt with methods which are helpful to the teacher. These methods differed only slightly as to detail, and provided a basis for experiment within the classroom. These were the main steps mentioned for successful role-playing:

1. Selection of the issue or problem to be dramatized.

2. Warm-up for relaxation of the students.

3. Explanation of the situation.

4. Choosing participants.

5. Preparing the audience for involvement in the sociodrama.

6. The role-playing activity.

7. Group discussion of the drama, then possible re-playing scene.

8. Evaluation of the sociodrama.

Most experimenters found role-playing helpful in changing attitudes. The fact that participants reacted more strongly than observers to role-playing would indicate that each student should have the opportunity to participate. More studies need to be done over a long period of time to discover the effectiveness of role-playing in behavior change.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES FOR THE STUDY

I. DESCRIPTION OF THE CLASS

The class used in the experiment was a sixth grade class
at Eugene Field School in Manhattan. It was composed of twenty-
five Caucasian children of middle-income families. The fathers
of five of the children were affiliated with Kansas State
University, while twelve other fathers are business or profes-
sional workers. The children were strongly imbued with the
value of education, of achievement, of fair play, and of demo-
cratic ideals. They respected authority, for the most part,
and were courteous. During the last half of the year, problems
which ordinarily accompany beginning adolescence became notice-
able, and attempts to overcome them were made through role-play-
ing.

II. DESCRIPTION OF THE TECHNIQUES

Several role-playing sessions were described, one in de-
tail, to show growth in role-playing technique, increasing
ability of the children to fully play the role of another,
increasing ability to see another's point of view, and ability
to see many alternative solutions to problems.

Use of a real situation of dispute. The first attempt at
role-playing by the class was not a successful one. It occurred
after there had been a playground dispute involving six chil-
dren in the class. Involved were two boys who took several
classroom balls outside, and four other children who attempted

to take a ball from them for a game of kickball. The two boys
who took the balls out were enraged and felt they had been
wronged. When the class returned to the room following recess,
role-playing the situation was tried, using the people who had
been involved. The two boys refused to take part; they were
sure they were right. The situation was too overheated to
successfully role-play it.

The following day those involved assumed their own roles
as during the disagreement. This time the two boys quietly
gave a ball to the girl who had asked for it, and the disturb-
ance was avoided.

Use of a similar problem. A problem occurred in the class-
room a few weeks later. This dealt with the chairman of a
committee who became a dictator when he was given authority.

Instead of role-playing this situation directly from life,
an unfinished story was written by the investigator which dealt
with the same problem. The work of the committee was different
and observation confirmed that the boy involved did not feel
threatened. The action to finish the story was dramatized four
times, using two all-girl committees and two all-boy committees.
In each of the committees, a person other than the chairman
assumed some authority and asked the other members to help him
overrule the chairman. In each, the chairman gave no indication
of modifying his opinion. One boy suggested a compromise, which
was rejected by both the chairman and the other committee mem-
bers. Some "patterning", that is, using the same solution as

the previous group, was noted, as had been observed in Lippitt's [1] experiment.

Boyd and Youssi[2] had reported in their studies at the University of Wyoming that sixth graders used role-playing as a release of tension. This was noticeable in the experiment cited especially with one group of girls. Two of the girls had a quarrel during the course of the action which had a great deal of reality to it, since they are often critical of each other but not always openly so. As the quarrel gave no sign of abating, the scene was terminated.

During the discussion, it was pointed out that the chairman should not force his own choices on the committee, but that choices should be made democratically by the committee. All the students felt that the chairman was wrong; they failed to empathize with him at all.

The following day, discussion was renewed concerning the problem of a committee chairman's responsibility. Leading questions were asked to help the students better identify with the chairman. Most still felt that he was wrong, but they began to find new ways to solve the problem. One person suggested writing down pros and cons of the choice to be made so that the chairman and the committee could then consider a solution together. Since the decision of the committee would

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[1] Lippitt, Lippitt, and Fox, loc. cit.

[2] Gertrude A. Boyd, and Myrtle R. Youssi, "Role-Playing Reveals Language Levels," Elementary English, 34:388-393, October, 1957.

involve the whole class, others thought that the matter should
be presented to the class for a decision. A compromise deci-
sion was more acceptable after empathizing with the chairman.
The investigator found that returning to the problem on the
following day to be a helpful technique, as did Shaftel and
Shaftel[1].

The audience should have been better prepared by the
director to identify with characters in the action. Empathy
with the chairman was difficult because the children knew that
his methods were "wrong". The children who played the chair-
man's role felt that they desperately had to defend his posi-
tion because it was threatened by so many. The committee mem-
bers did not want to compromise with that which was "wrong".
The central issue in this situation, as in many others, is to
help the children understand that there are many situations in
which there is no clear right-wrong dichotomy, but that both
persons in a disagreement may be partially right. They must
also understand that all people are wrong sometimes, and that
they should accept this in themselves as well as in others.
Identifying with those in trouble in role-playing situations
will provide a less threatening way to do this than in real life.

Role Reversal. In order to find pertinent problems upon
which to base role-playing sessions, the children were asked

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[1]George and Fannie Shaftel, "Report on the Use of a Practice
Action Level in the Stanford University Project for American
Ideals," in Robert Haas, ed., Psychodrama and Sociodrama in
American Education, (New York: Beacon House, 1949.) pp. 57-63.

anonymously to submit problems which they found difficult to solve. One which was often mentioned was getting along with a brother or sister.

A situation for role-playing was created in which a small brother who was home all day wanted to play with his older sister when she came home from school. The sister had a test to study for, and she did not want to be bothered.

The two actors each were given a slip of paper on which the situation and their feelings concerning it were briefly described. The situation was dramatized three times, with discussion following each time. The first time ended in a stalemate, an argument which neither actor was prepared to terminate. The second pair of actors decided to take the problem to the mother for solution.

The last set of actors were at first very undecided about how to act, so the investigator suggested that they exchange roles. This enabled them to understand the other person's position more clearly. They made a compromise; the sister decided to play for a few minutes with her little brother, then to study.

The children found it difficult to imagine themselves as the four-year old brother. Self-consciousness caused them to overact but in replaying the scene they seemed to settle down and be more concerned about a solution to the problem than about themselves. Role reserval is a particularly effective technique when used in a situation of conflict between two people only.

Audience identification, actor planning. Another problem
concerning committee work was read to the class. In this case,
a boy had been offered a reward by his father for a perfect
record in arithmetic for a week. He was also in a committee
which was responsible for producing a mural. He had not
explained the conflict to the committee and felt shy about doing
so.

Two attempts were made to solve the problem. In each case,
the actors were given a chance to play a general course of
action, but not precisely what they would say. Each individual
in the audience was asked to find a character with whom to
identify. In the first dramatization, the boy quickly finished
his arithmetic and jointed the group. He is a boy who in real
life is usually finished with his work quickly. The investiga-
tor explained to him that perhaps this could be a solution for
him but would not be fore those who worked more slowly. In that
way, it was not a solution, but an evasion of the problem.

In the second portrayal, the boy compromised by doing one-
half of his arithmetic assignment, then helping the committee.
He planned to finish the assignment at home.

Allowing a few minutes for planning by the actors gave
them more confidence and allowed them to direct more of their
energy to solution of the problem. The audience was more atten-
tive, as they related themselves to a character readily. It was
easier to identify with all characters in the situation because
there was no one whom they felt was completely "wrong" and thus
"bad".

A group relations problem. Thus far, problems which had been attempted were ones like those faced by the children at the present, but a race relations problem would be a new one. Since their school was unintegrated because of location, the children had not been faced with problems of race relations. At the junior high school, they would need to make decisions concerning integration.

The situation was that a Negro girl sat down in a class-room, between two white girls. One of the white girls spoke rudely to her, then got up and moved away. The other was left in an embarrassing silence with the crestfallen Negro girl.

The audience was asked to empathize with one of the characters, and the actors were given a chance to plan their actions. Two solutions were acted out for the problem. Both times the white girl merely ignored what had been said, and made an attempt to be friendly. One made plans to show the Negro girl around the school, since she was new to the city and was not familiar with the school. In the second enactment, the white girl invited the Negro girl to her house so that they could work together on arithmetic problems. The class saw both of these as very satisfactory solutions to the problem.

The double. The use of a person who acts as a conscience or a double was the next method attempted. It was thought wise to reserve this technique until the children were thoroughly familiar with sociodrama and felt comfortable with it. A record was made of this session on tape and it appears here, with comments concerning the action.

TEACHER: Have you ever taken a
very difficult test?

(murmered "yes, yeah," nodding of
heads.)

TEACHER: Maybe this test was one
on which you really wanted to do
well, and it just seemed that you
couldn't. What solutions did you
think of to your problem?

BOY: I thought about cheating,
but I didn't.

GIRL: I didn't know what to do.

BOY: I just handed my paper in and
forgot it.

TEACHER: This story is about a girl
who has this problem. You're prob-
ably thinking that this will be hard
to act out by yourself. Today we
will try something a little
different. One person will be the
one trying to make a decision, and
another person will be his conscience.
How does your conscience act?

GIRL: Mine tells me when I've done
something wrong.

TEACHER: Yes, many consciences act
this way. Let's see how the con-
science behaves in this story.

It was only a week until grade cards
were due again, and Sally was worried
about her science test. Last night she
had gone with her parents to dinner at
some friends' house, and she had not
had much time to study. She had
studied a little bit before, but it had
been so hard to concentrate when the
weather had been warm and she wanted
to go out and play kickball.
Just then, Mrs. Jones, her teacher,
passed out the tests. They surely did
look long. Sally looked at her friend,
Carolyn, who sat next to her. Carolyn

Sensitizing the chil-
dren to the problem.
Exploring pupil readi-
ness; showing under-
standing of student
dilemna.

Relating the story
to student experience.
Explanation of new
technique.

Relating the
unfinished story to
the class.

always did so well on tests, and it
seemed that she never had to study.

Carolyn didn't look worried as she
started on the first question. Sally
answered the first, and the second
question, then looked at the third
question: "Explain the difference
between crop rotation and contour plow-
ing as conservation methods." Sally
couldn't remember what crop rotation
meant. She tried and tried to think.
She glanced over at Carolyn, who was
busily writing one answer after another.
"It just doesn't seem fair that she
should have all the brain. I'll just
see what Carolyn put down on that
third question. But ...."

Who would like to help finish this story?

(Most hands go up. Teacher chooses
two boys.)

TEACHER: Would you two boys please
sit here in these two chairs?

Setting the stage.

(to audience) Try to put yourself in
the place of this person who had a
decision to make.
(to actors) Let's start just after you
had thought it wasn't fair, Sally, for
Carolyn to have all the brains. Con-
science, why don't you begin the action?

Preparing the
audience for
listening.

CONSCIENCE: But..ah..suppose you grow
up in high school, man, and if you get
an F on this test, you get an F on the
test, but you can't learn anything by
copying. She may have all the brains,
but how good is she in other subjects?

Generalizing. Stat-
ing one of the most
important reasons
for not cheating.

SALLY: I don't think it's fair. I can
copy now and worry about that later.

Emphasis on the
present.

CONSCIENCE: You sound like these
finance companies that get people in
trouble. That's exactly what they do.
They get people to borrow money and
then they don't have any money to pay
it with.

Comparison to an
adult problem.
Cause and effect
relationship.

SALLY: I'm going to be in trouble if
I get an F on that test

Possible exaggera-
tion, fear of punish-
ment.

COMMENTS

CONSCIENCE: Just think how much
more trouble you'll be in if you
copy and don't know it later.

SALLY: I guess that's tough for me
but I have to think about now.

CONSCIENCE: If you think about now,   The maturing child
you don't think of the future. Sure,   thinking of the
you get an F on this test, but you...   future.
in the future it will help you because
you can look back on your science and
learn it. If you copy you won't think
to look back, and you won't learn it.

SALLY: That's just about it; I could
copy now, then when that same problem
comes up in the future, I'd have time
to review it and know it.

CONSCIENCE: If you get into a habit of   New reason for not
it, you'll keep copying.   copying.

SALLY: Gee, this about crop rotation,
I just can't get it. This will be the
only one.

CONSCIENCE: Yeah, the only one, but
when you get to the next one, what
will you do? What is the next one?
"What method is used on hills?"

SALLY: (very softly) I haven't
studied that.

CONSCIENCE: I know.

TEACHER: (after a short silence) The   Restructuring when the
boys have not yet come to a solution.   actors were temporarily
They were certainly putting themselves   puzzled about
into their role, weren't they? What   appropriate action.
arguments did they present for and   Starting discussion.
against cheating?

GIRL: If she did cheat, she would
not be in trouble.

GIRL: But if she does cheat, she   Listing of points
might get into the habit.   brought out in the
                                         action.

BOY: You don't learn anything if
you cheat.

COMMENTS

TEACHER: What other reasons can you think of to cheat, or not to cheat? — Asking for new ideas.

BOY: If you copy from someone, they might have the wrong answer.

GIRL: The teacher might catch you.

GIRL: If you copy, you might get away with it for a while, but what would happen if the person you copied from got sick?

TEACHER: Which of you would like to try this again? Perhaps you can use some of these ideas.

(Assigning roles, action starting in the same place as previously.)

CONSCIENCE: You shouldn't copy—you'll get into the habit and that wouldn't be too good. — Restating a comment made previously.

SALLY: Yeah, but if I copy, I'll get a good grade, and then my parents will be happy with me. — Need for parental approval.

CONSCIENCE: What if the teacher finds out? What will you do then?

SALLY: I don't know. I'll cross that bridge when I come to it. — Ignoring possible consequences.

CONSCIENCE: But it will be hard to do. You'd better think about it now.

SALLY: If I don't get caught and my parents are happy with me, I won't have any problems.

CONSCIENCE: But what if you get good grades and all of a sudden the person you copy from is sick? You'll get a bad grade and the teacher will find out.

SALLY: Maybe I won't copy all the time, just this once. — An excuse.

CONSCIENCE: You can still get in the habit, and that's not good. — Repetition

SALLY: It's just one question.

CONSCIENCE: One question can be an awful lot.

SALLY: Well, if I missed just one question, I guess it would be O.K.

Rather sudden compliance.

CONSCIENCE: Yeah . . .

TEACHER: This time a solution was reached. Do you think it was a good solution?

Leading question to again draw the observers into the action.

CLASS: Yes.

TEACHER: These people used some of the arguments we had thought of for and against cheating. Let's try it once more and see if the solution is any different.

(The action took place one more time, and the theme this time seemed to be punishment. The child trying to decide was afraid he would be punished for doing poorly on the test, but he was also afraid of getting caught cheating. In the end, it was the latter fear which conquered and the child decided not to copy.)

TEACHER: Now we have several answers to the question of whether or not to copy some one else's answers. Perhaps some of them will fit you. What do you think about it? Has it helped you think more clearly about the problem?

BOY: I think cheating is too much of a risk. The person may have the wrong answer, or even if he's right, you'll probably get caught.

Insight into the problem revealed.

GIRL: I'd sure feel embarrassed if my friends knew I'd cheated.

Peer code already important in this age group.

TEACHER: How do the rest of you feel about it?

Helping students summarize.

GIRL: I wouldn't cheat.

BOY: It's not worth it.

TEACHER: During the first role-playing
Conscience mentioned that cheating
didn't help us learn anything. It
may be that schools and teachers have
put too much emphasis on grades, and
that we think more about them than we
should. We should be thinking of what
we learn that we can use later. Did
you enjoy today's skit?

It was interesting to note that the reasons for the
decision not to cheat were based on the consequences of the
action. Whether this is because of their age, or that the
children just have not internalized this standard yet was a
question unanswerable to the investigator. Perhaps the conse-
quences are more real to them than the abstract principle of
honesty.

The use of a conscience appeared to be a useful one to
help the children air difficult decisions. Children at this
age are often too self-conscious to use the soliloquy effec-
tively, and this method is a good alternative.

Some very mature generalizations were made by the students,
especially those regarding future consequences. The point of
view of their parents and teacher was reflected.

The teacher could have structured the situation so that
the actors had time to plan the action. Questions which
allowed the audience to feel more a part of the action might
have resulted in even better response from them; these might
have included some questions about why the actors had behaved

the way that they did. The warm-up was omitted since the
children were familiar by this time with the sociodrama,
and seemed eager to begin the action.

III. EVALUATION

It is clear that the best evaluation in the sociodrama
is observation of behavior changes. No written records were
kept in individual cases during the experiment. The best way
to acquire a complete record would be to use sociodrama dur-
ing an entire school year, and make anecdotal records.
Ascertaining which changes were attributable to role-playing
and which were attributable to maturation or other growth
experiences would be difficult.

The children were very enthusiastic about sociodrama.
Part of this could have been due to the Hawthorne effect.
Sociodrama should not be overused so that the children become
tired of it. Only one child who was asked to participate was
reluctant; others were eager. Audience response to the drama
was attentive, and when they were later asked to discuss the
solution, most volunteered opinions.

The director improved in her technique during the course
of the experiments. Preparation of the audience for intelli-
gent observation increased the interest in the drama. More
improvement was needed in helping the characters become real to
the actors who were playing their roles; sometimes the actors
did not identify well enough to do a convincing job of acting.
The director improved in discussion techniques, but needed to

lead the discussion more in the direction of discovering the "why" of the actions, rather then just a surface motive. It was difficult for the director to refrain from reinforcing opinions which she felt were most suitable to the situation.

Flexibility was one of the goals of sociodrama. This was a goal which could be measured somewhat more easily than most. An unfinished story was read to the children before the project was started. They were asked to find as many solutions to the problem as they could think of and write them down. The same story was read as the project drew to a close, and the initial request for solutions was repeated. Each student gave at least one additional answer the second time. There was an average of 1.46 solutions to the problem the first time, and 3.17 solutions the second time the story was presented, showing a gain of 1.71 answers per child. An increase in problem-solving skills, and flexibility was shown.

Sociodrama is an aid in solving problems in the classroom or on the playground. A teacher should not attempt to role-play a situation when feeling is running too high about it. It could not lead to rational thinking in this case.

Problems which are too psychologically deep-seated are not to be attempted by the teacher. Those which deal with issues that are too heated within the community are best dealt with cautiously if at all. Interpersonal problems, such as helping the child learn to get along with his age mates, are excellent for sociodrama. Those which are concerned with decisions to be made help the person to understand himself better and help him establish a set of values and morals which he has really thought through. The student realizes his responsibility for his own actions, thus strengthening his independence.

CHAPTER V.
SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

Problems of adjustment to modern life have pointed up the need for schools to be more instrumental in preparing students to face life's problems. Insight is needed by students into the solution of interpersonal problems, into the analysis of problems, and into their self-concept as individuals and as members of a group.

Role-playing is the most realistic way, other than actual experience, in which a child can participate physically and mentally in the living through of a problem. It builds versatility and resourcefulness.

The review of literature provided necessary information about techniques to be used and steps to be followed. The steps were those considered necessary to success in socio-drama: selection of the problem by the teacher; warm-up; explaining the problem to the children; choosing participants; involving the audience in the action; role-playing; discussion and perhaps replaying; evaluation.

Several techniques of sociodrama were used in the experiment. The first attempt was to act out a problem which the class had just experienced. This was unsuccessul because the children were too emotionally involved.

Another problem which occurred in the classroom was handled somewhat differently. An unfinished story was created

by the teacher which had similar elements, but was different enough to not be obvious to those involved. Endings for the story were dramatized the day after the problem had occurred. Solutions in four dramatizations were similar. The solutions together with later discussion added up to a profitable session. Some problems of identification with the character who was "wrong" were noted. This was improved by discussion the following day.

The reversing of roles provided an insightful method into understanding someone else's point of view. When each person reassumed the role he originally played, he did so with much more awareness of the other person's feelings.

A situation which may be faced by the students during their next school year at the junior high school formed the basis for another sociodrama. It involved racial prejudice, a major social issue today. The problem was dealt with twice; both times the persons involved attempted to be very kind. Discussion revealed that most students had a largely unprejudiced attitude. They realized that all people have feelings and these should be respected.

Asking each member of the audience to identify with a character provided better discussion during another sociodrama, which involved a decision to be made. Allowing the actors to plan for a few minutes what they wanted to say seemed to increase their confidence, and to allow them to focus on the problem.

The last sociodrama was analyzed in detail, pointing out indications of growth in understanding relationships and indications of weaknesses and strengths in the technique used. The issue was one of whether or not the person involved should copy from another person's test paper. Use was made of a double, or conscience, and the two persons spoke aloud much as a person would debate within his own mind about the decision to be made. Consequences of alternative actions were discussed, and the decision that cheating would not be best was based upon these alternatives.

Evaluation was partially done by observation. Enthusiasm for sociodrama was evident from the response of the children. The director acquired the use of many new techniques, and was aware of needed improvement in some. An increase in flexibility was evident from the results of an informal test which asked for possible solutions to a problem. This test was administered at the beginning and at the end of the experiment and revealed a growth in number and variety of solutions which occurred to the students.

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ROLE-PLAYING AS A TECHNIQUE FOR DEVELOPING
SELF-AWARENESS AND SOCIAL GROWTH
IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

by

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

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———————
Major Professor

The objective of the study was to investigate role-playing as a technique to develop self-awareness and for forming meaningful interpersonal relations. The questions asked concerned (1) what problems could be solved by using role-playing, (2) what the techniques of role-playing were, and how they were to be used, (3) the possible use of role-playing to solve interpersonal class problems, (4) and the evaluation of role-playing.

The review of literature provided the investigator with the steps for a sociodrama and with different techniques to be tried. Problems which are interpersonal in nature are good subjects for role-playing. Those which concern personal decisions are also good, as these can be done in soliloquy or with a double. Problems which are deeply psychological should not be attempted but should be referred to an authority for treatment. Problems chosen should be of interest to the group, and appropriate to their ages.

A sixth-grade class of predominately middle-income children were used in the experiment. The experimental program began with an attempt to role-play a struggle which had occurred on the playground. It was unsuccessful because of the heated tempers of the children. It would have been better to wait until the tempers had cooled, and rational thought could again take place.

When the next problem developed, the investigator waited until the following day, and wrote an unfinished story using many of the same elements. This story was presented to the class and endings to the story were dramatized. The session was much more profitable, though most children did not empathize with the character whom they considered to be "wrong" in the story because they had not been properly prepared by the director.

Sibling problems were frequently mentioned in an anonymous list of problems submitted by the students, so this became the next subject for sociodrama. The problem concerned a small brother and a sister who was the age of the class. Actors had a difficult time taking the role of the brother. Since neither seemed willing to compromise, the drama ended in stalemate or in consultation of the mother to solve the problem. The third time it was suggested that the actors exchange roles when they again experienced difficulty. This was a great help in understanding the other person's point of view. When they resumed their original roles, they were much more willing to compromise and to reach a solution satisfactory to both.

In the next sociodrama, members of the audience were each asked to identify with the actor of their choice during the drama. This led to better discussion, since the audience felt

more a part of the action. The actors were given a few
minutes to plan their actions, and as a result were less
self-conscious and able to concentrate better on the pro-
blems at hand.

A social problem, that of race relations, was the
basis of another sociodrama. For the most part, the
children were sympathetic to the Negro girl who had been
rudely treated. The drama was an attempt to help her feel
better and feel accepted.

The final role-playing activity, the use of a double,
or conscience, was recorded on tape, presented in the paper,
and commented upon. Thus the steps taken, growth of insight
by actors and observers, and strong and weak points of the
director could be noted.

Evaluation of the experiment was partially done by
observation. Enthusiam of the students was high. The
director acquired the use of new techniques and was aware
of needed improvement in others. An evaluative test revealed
a growth in the number of answers given by the students.
Role-playing is a good technique to aid in both the social
and emotional growth of students.