

# Insights into Experiential Pedagogy, Volume 6, 1979

## THE BASEBALL GAME: A GROUP MEMBER ROLE OBSERVATION, PROBLEM SOLVING EXPERIENCE

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### ABSTRACT

This paper describes an experiential exercise that can be used to help group members identify and understand aspects of perception, role classification and the problem solving process in small group interaction. The possible goals of the exercise are to allow participants to: explore a novel way of observing group member roles; enhance awareness of how perception works in groups; observe the difference between first and second impressions; gain some insight into how others perceive them; allow group members to check how closely their individual choices match the group choice; study the variety of roles present in problem solving groups; provide a different form of problem solving exercise.

### INTRODUCTION

The total exercise requires approximately two hours and uses a format where the overall class is divided into small groups of between four and eight participants. An unlimited number of groups can be directed simultaneously. Smaller groups tend to work better on the problem solving exercise; larger groups are better for the impression forming process.

The physical setting requires a room large enough to comfortably accommodate an unlimited number of small groups. Tables or circles of chairs should be available for each group.

The materials needed are: pencils and paper for all participants, a "Group Member Roles description list for each participant, a "First Impression: Group Member Roles observation form for each participant, a "Second Impression: Group Member Roles" form for each participant, a "Baseball Team Exercise" form for each participant, and a "Baseball Team Exercise Answers" form for each group.

### INSTRUCTIONS FOR FACILITATORS

1. The facilitator starts by introducing the exercise and its purpose, and then giving a short lecture on the roles that members play in groups--especially problem solving groups. The "Group Member Role" description sheet is then distributed and the various roles are discussed.

2. After the facilitator decides on the number of groups and group members, the large group is divided by a counting-off procedure. Each participant then moves to the table where his number is displayed.

3. After the groups are located comfortably around the room the "First Impression: Group Member Role" form is distributed to each person.

4. The participants are given approximately ten minutes to openly and honestly fill out the "First Impression" form. If the group is comprised of members who have not interacted before, the facilitator may wish to give them ten or fifteen minutes to complete an ice breaker or warm-up activity.

5. After completing the "First Impression" form the participants receive the "Baseball Team Exercise." They are then given forty-five minutes to complete the problem solving exercise.

6. After all groups have decided which members in the exercise play which positions, the facilitator gives each group a "Baseball Team Exercise Answers" form.

7. The participants are then given ten minutes to fill out the "Second Impression: Group Member Role" sheet. These observations should reflect the perceptions the members obtained during the problem solving exercise.

8. The groups are instructed to spend several minutes sharing their first and second impressions. As a part of this sharing they should relate how the various members played the roles during the problem solving exercise.

9. After sufficient sharing has taken place the facilitator re-assembles the entire group for deprocessing. All members are encouraged to share their initial feelings and expectations and to provide feedback on the entire exercise.

10. The facilitator may wish to conclude with a short discussion on group member roles and their importance in the problem solving process.

### APPENDIX I

#### GROUP MEMBER ROLES

##### Umpire

A good umpire helps an entire group work and participate peacefully. He often serves as both a "mediator" and an "expediter." As the former, he conciliates differences in points of view and seeks compromise solutions. As an "expediter," he keeps communication channels open by facilitating the comments of two opposing sides.

If this person is a designated leader he has the authority to administer all rules and to enforce penalties. Thus, he is cognizant of the procedures and rules by which the group functions.

##### Pitcher

The pitcher is the person who does the talking, and he can often determine the task outcome and direction of the group's movement. There are many different types of pitchers and any member of the group can serve in this role. The pitcher's first job is to make sure all other members are attentive and ready to work before he talks. Frequently, he has to draw responses from others.

The pitcher also serves as a "diagnoser," and information or "opinion" giver. As a "diagnoser," he de-

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termines the problem's source and both the supporting and resisting factors. In giving "information" or "opinion," he helps produce data that is pertinent to the group's problem solving.

### Types of Pitchers

Change-of-pace. This pitcher throws a 'slow ball.' The slower the idea is delivered the harder it is to hit for any distance.

Control. On this pitch, the pitcher does not use 'fast talk' or 'breaking thoughts.' He delivers the idea to the exact spot. This pitcher uses a variety of techniques to keep "sluggers" off-balance.

Curve. When this pitcher throws, the idea "breaks" past the participants and they miss it completely.

Fast ball. This pitcher's slogan is, "If they can't see it, they can't hit it. Thus, he catches the batter off-balance by throwing the ball past them.

Fork ball. This pitcher catches batters "off-guard." The idea he introduces breaks in the opposite direction at the last minute.

Knuckle ball. This pitcher throws a slow ball that is dead when it is hit.

Relief. This pitcher does not talk a lot. He enters the discussion and quickly guides the group from its impasse.

### Catcher

The catcher listens to all members, solicits pertinent ideas, classifies the relationships between the ideas and suggestions, and draws together the efforts of members or subgroups. In a task role he is a 'coordinator- integrator.

The catcher is in charge of maintenance and strategy. He also serves occasionally as an 'information' or opinion' seeker by asking other members for additional facts. Thus, he calls forth ideas and keeps the rest of the team informed about the group's progress.

He usually positions himself in an unobstructed view of the entire group in order to hear everything that is being said. He is an artist at giving signals to other team members--especially the pitcher.

### Infielder

This player frequently fields the ideas made by other team members, helps cover their positions and supports their ideas. This requires quick mental reactions and a sharp sure decision making ability. He quickly assesses situations, pulls together all ideas and suggestions, and restates these for group clarity.

### Outfielder

The outfielder has the most territory to cover. From a task standpoint: he is an "energizer." He is known for his "hustle," and for prodding the group to a higher quality of participation. He is extremely alert, always ready to participate and assumes the next idea will be directed to him. He is also sensitive to the atmosphere and climate of the group and to the direction of the flow of ideas and cross-winds that could prevent a successful play.

### Batter

A good batter observes the group in process. He watches others and consciously determines how to influence the

process in the most advantageous way. He does not: try to "outguess" an idea, but "anticipates" that the best ideas will be tossed out.

The best batters have a sense for the flow of discussion. They have a good mental attitude, accurate timing on the question-answer sequence, and confidence that their statements will be instructional, correct and accepted.

### Coach

This member is the designated leader of the team. From a task position he plays the role of a "procedural technician." He expedites the group process by performing needed routine tasks like: the distribution of equipment and materials, the physical arrangement of seats and tables and time keeping.

The effective coach is an 'encourager.' He offers positive feedback and praise, and accepts each member's contribution. He also serves as an advisor, not as an authoritarian or disciplinarian. He instructs the members well. He knows their abilities and temperaments, attempts to create a feeling of trust and respect, and helps each person produce at his highest level of efficiency.

In a team building and maintenance role the coach is a 'standard setter.' He keeps the team focused on the standards used in evaluating alternatives and in reaching final decisions.

The most effective coach researches the problem thoroughly before entering with the team into problem solving. He does his homework and has all available data at his disposal. The agenda and the process are thus tailored to the team's needs. He makes assignments, delegates authority, communicates constantly and gives advice in the problem solving process.

### Scorekeeper

This member serves in a task role as a "recorder. He takes minutes, writes down suggestions and notes decisions. In a maintenance role he records data and sends it., along with personal interpretations, into the teams evaluation of its own procedures.

### Designated Hitter

This player is called upon to advance the group when it is in difficulty. Sometimes he serves as an "information giver" or as an "elaborator, who spells out: ideas, develops meanings, or offers rationales and explanations for suggestions previously made.

### Team Clown

The team clown serves a "nonfunctional" role. He is apt to horse around, joke, mimic or pull other disruptive acts at inopportune times. Some people call him a "playboy" because of the display of noninvolvement in the group's processes.

### Hot Head

This player interferes with straight thinking and tends to throw fellow players off-balance. He plays a nonfunctional role and becomes aggressive, criticizes or blames others, shows hostility against individuals or the group, is envious of the credit other members receive, and often deflates the ego of other members.

### Hitter's Slump

This player can be, and often is, productive in a meet-

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ing. Yet sometimes he withdraws by acting indifferent, daydreaming or wandering from the subject. Hitting slumps are caused by: a lack of self confidence, a change in the agenda, a lack of knowledge or trying to overly influence others.

If this team member is in a slump for a prolonged period of time, he becomes a 'sympathy seeker' by trying to induce others to give him recognition or by deploring the situation. Fellow teammates can help a hitter out of a slump by giving positive feedback or instructive comments.

### Glory Hog

This player may start Out as a hero by making a terrific play or by contributing significantly to the team effort. However, he soon becomes a "recognition seeker" by doing various things to call attention to himself. This may take the form of boasting, bragging about personal achievements, loud or excessive talking, or unusual behavior.

#### APPENDIX II

##### FIRST IMPRESSION: GROUP MEMBER ROLES

Write the names of each of your group in a space that corresponds to the role you perceive they will probably play in your group. Each group member can be listed in more than one position. You should also list yourself.

Umpire \_\_\_\_\_  
Pitcher \_\_\_\_\_  
Change-of-Pace \_\_\_\_\_  
Control \_\_\_\_\_  
Curve \_\_\_\_\_  
Fast ball \_\_\_\_\_  
Fork ball \_\_\_\_\_  
Knuckle ball \_\_\_\_\_  
Relief \_\_\_\_\_  
Catcher \_\_\_\_\_  
Infielder \_\_\_\_\_  
Outfielder \_\_\_\_\_  
Batter \_\_\_\_\_  
Coach \_\_\_\_\_  
Scorekeeper \_\_\_\_\_  
Designated Hitter \_\_\_\_\_  
Team Clown \_\_\_\_\_  
Hot Head \_\_\_\_\_  
Hitter's Slump \_\_\_\_\_  
Glory Hog \_\_\_\_\_

#### APPENDIX III

##### SECOND IMPRESSION: GROUP MEMBER ROLES

Following your group exercise write the names of each of your group members in the space corresponding to the actual role they played during the event. Each group member can be listed in more than one position. You

should also list yourself.

Umpire \_\_\_\_\_  
Pitcher \_\_\_\_\_  
Change-of-Pace \_\_\_\_\_  
Control \_\_\_\_\_  
Curve \_\_\_\_\_  
Fast ball \_\_\_\_\_  
Fork ball \_\_\_\_\_  
Knuckle ball \_\_\_\_\_  
Relief \_\_\_\_\_  
Catcher \_\_\_\_\_  
Infielder \_\_\_\_\_  
Outfielder \_\_\_\_\_  
Batter \_\_\_\_\_  
Coach \_\_\_\_\_  
Scorekeeper \_\_\_\_\_  
Designated Hitter \_\_\_\_\_  
Team Clown \_\_\_\_\_  
Hot Head \_\_\_\_\_  
Hitter's Slump \_\_\_\_\_  
Glory Hog \_\_\_\_\_

#### APPENDIX IV

##### BASEBALL TEAM EXERCISE

To test your understanding of the positions found on a baseball team you might try your logic in solving this problem. Nine men: Duncan, Winters, Perry, Banks, Dixon, Billings Woods, Johnson, and Lynch, play the several positions on a baseball team. As a group, determine from the following data the position played by each. Record your answers at the bottom of the page.

1. The second baseman beat Johnson, Duncan, Billings, and the catcher at golf.
2. Lynch and Duncan each won \$50.00 in playing cards with the pitcher.
3. Johnson has an apartment across the hall from the third baseman.
4. The outfielders bowl with Banks in their spare time.
5. Winters is taller than Billings; Woods is shorter than Billings. Each of them weighs more than the third baseman.
6. Duncan, Perry, and the shortstop lost \$300 each betting on the horses.
7. The catcher has three daughters; the third baseman has two sons; Dixon is being sued for divorce.
8. Perry dislikes the catcher and lives in a house with his sister.
9. One of the outfield positions is played by either Perry or Woods.
10. The center fielder is taller than the right fielder.
11. The pitcher's wife is the third baseman's sister.
12. Dixon is taller than the infielders and the batter with the exception of Johnson, Lynch, and Perry.
13. Banks' sister is engaged to the second baseman.
14. The third baseman, the shortstop, and Billings made \$150 speculating on commodities.
15. Four members of the team are married. Winters, Banks, Duncan, the right fielder, and the center

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fielder are bachelors.

Catcher _____	Pitcher _____
First Baseman _____	Second Baseman _____
Third Baseman _____	Shortstop _____
Left Field _____	Center Field _____
Right Field _____	

### APPENDIX V

#### BASEBALL TEAM EXERCISE ANSWERS

Catcher <u>Lynch</u>	Pitcher <u>Johnson</u>
First Baseman <u>Duncan</u>	Second Baseman <u>Winters</u>
Third Baseman <u>Perry</u>	Shortstop <u>Banks</u>
Left Field <u>Dixon</u>	Center Field <u>Billings</u>
Right Field <u>Woods</u>	