Understanding theories of international development through role-play: a critical discussion of a post-graduate seminar activity exploring two contrasting theories

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Abstract

It is critical that students of international development understand the theoretical foundations of practice and policy in this field. Dependency theory and neo-liberalism provide divergent perspectives regarding the causes of and solutions to 'under-development' in the Global South. This article outlines a student role-play activity that was developed to both clarify these theories of development and to consider the tensions between them. The article describes both the rationale for, and the main components and processes of this role-play, and reflects critically on the learning process and outcomes of the role-play method.

Key words: development education, role-play, international development, neo-liberalism, dependency theory

Introduction

Higher education in international development is focused, by definition, on global learning in that it is international in orientation, includes diverse country and social contexts, and engages with transnational theories and forces that shape processes of development (Irving, Yeates and Young, 2005). Students of international development typically have genuine concern about the inequitable distribution of resources and the suffering of people in the Global South (Schuurman, 2009), and are often interested to address this disadvantage and suffering through field-based practice and programmatic initiatives. The international development job market has a demand for people who know how to prepare, manage, evaluate and increase the impact and efficiency of development projects, and accordingly, there is a clear interest among students in developing practical skills. Nonetheless, theory is a central concern for international development: it directs action to the perceived causes of development and under-development (Korten, 1990) and provides diverse rationale for the existence of global inequalities.

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This article outlines a role play exercise for post-graduate students of international development in which students play the role of various interest groups, and debate both the causes and means of addressing 'under-development' in the Global South. This exercise was conceived as a mechanism for engaging students with two divergent theories: dependency theory and neo-liberalism. Bourn (2008) argues that development education must challenge the reproduction of established theories and fields of knowledge, and that dialogue and debate can facilitate the emergence of new and more nuanced perspectives and positions. This activity provides opportunity to not only understand key theories and their associated policies, but also to consider the uncertainties and perceived strengths and weaknesses of these theories, and how they relate to global processes. As Brunold (2005) states, 'global learning' should not aim to establish the right or most appropriate concepts and answers, but to provide methods for considering tensions and uncertainties around knowledge and theories and increasing integrative and systems thinking (see also Rauch and Steiner, 2006).

A critical approach to learning requires a broader set of skills than traditional lecture-based teaching can provide. Ross (2000) argues for a teaching model which moves from a 'content' approach (i.e. what is taught), through an 'objectives' approach (i.e. learning outcomes), to a process approach (i.e. how learning takes place). It is evident from education research that student participation is a strong teaching and learning process: it can increase ability to learn creatively and critically in order to better understand and synthesise concepts and reading material (Buchs and Blanchard, 2011; Rauch and Steiner, 2006; van der Meulen Rodgers, 1996). In particular, it is argued that role play can help students understand and apply theoretical concepts by actively engaging them in the learning process (DeNeve and Heppner, 1997). This is a particularly useful strategy for teaching that focuses on detailed theoretical concepts that also have 'real-world' practical application and impact. However, while role-play has been widely established as an effective pedagogical tool, it is nonetheless critical to consider its limitations, including how students interpret and integrate educational content, and what is discussed and what is obscured (Razack, 2009).

This article highlights both the positive learning outcomes and tensions that emerge when utilising a role-play activity to teach international development theory. The role play exercise was devised for a Masters level subject focusing on theories of international development. The majority of students were enrolled in a one-year course-work based Master of International Development degree that focuses on enhancing understanding of the linkages between and complexity of both, development theory and practice. In this exercise, students were invited to play the role of an actor who is involved in international development, and present both their own role's position and critically examine the positions adopted by other actors (students). The activity was constructed as a round-table discussion in which

representatives of organisations/stakeholders present their views and confront each other (Buchs and Blanchard, 2011). The role play aimed to collaboratively develop understanding of the key theoretical tenets of dependency and neo-liberal thinking, articulate relevant policy initiatives (i.e. what are their respective responses to under-development in the Global South), and tease out the contradictions within and between each theory.

The following discussion is organised into three sections. First, it provides a brief overview of the two theories at the core of the role-play: dependency theory and neo-liberalism. Second, it provides a summary of the role-play activity and outlines key processes. The third section reflects critically on how the role-play method frames international development and raises problematic issues around representation and identity, and how facilitation of the role-play can overcome some of these tendencies.

Background Dependency Theory and Neo-Liberalism

Theories of development directly shape development policies and are of profound significance for the world's population, particularly those living in the Global South. Theory is not an abstract academic field that is separate from procedural fields of practice, but is indeed the foundation of practice (Andreotti and de Souza, 2008). It is therefore critical that students of international development not only develop practical skills but also understand the theoretical foundations of practice in international development, as informed by specific lines of thinking. An important question, then, is how to engage students with theories of development. Theoretical concepts within international development are dense, contradictory and controversial. Dependency theory and neo-liberalism represent two highly influential theories that provide substantially different accounts of the causes and pathways to both development and under-development. As such, they provide strong vantage points from which to critically analyse the other.

The radical dependency perspective of the 1960s and early 1970s argued, from a neo-Marxist perspective, that relations between the Global North and the Global South (i.e. the modernised 'core' countries and traditional societies of the 'periphery') are fundamentally negative, exploitative and create conditions of poverty and under-development (Dos Santos, 1970; Emmanuel, 1972; Frank, 1966; Sunkel, 1972). Dos Santos defined dependence as 'a situation in which the economy of certain countries is conditioned by the development and expansion of another economy to which the former is subjected' (1970, 231). Dependency theorists, primarily critical Latin American intellectuals, argued that underdevelopment emerged through the expansion of European 'civilisation' into the Global South, accompanied by extraction of raw materials, disruption of social resources, and loss of autonomy. At the time, the solutions were seen by many dependency theorists to lie in structural change in 'peripheral' economies, such as import substitution industrialisation (i.e. replacing

industrial imports with domestic production) (Cardoso and Faletto, 1979; Frank, 1966; see also Peet and Hartwick, 2009). Dependency theory was concerned with macroeconomic structures and has been criticised for overstating its conclusions (Pieterse 1998, Slater 1993), yet it brought important themes into focus: structures of power; systematic patterns of inequality and exploitation; practices and frameworks of dependence (James, 1997).

By the end of the 1970s, the political and economic context of international development was very different (Kay, 1993). Many Third World countries were, for example, burdened with growing debt (McMichael, 2012; Slater, 1993). In 1980, the World Bank approved what became known as 'structural adjustment lending' with the aim of enforcing major changes in the policies and institutions of developing countries in order to reduce their current-account deficits in the medium term while maintaining 'the maximum feasible development effort' (World Bank, 1981: 69). This policy response was informed directly by neo-liberal thinking. Neo-liberalism broadly asserts that the route to economic growth and development is through reducing state intervention, outward orientation in trade relations, and letting the market set prices and wages and self-adjust to solve problems (Palley, 2005; Willis, 2011). Since the 1980s, neo-liberal thinking has had substantial influence in determining development practice and research agendas (Schuurman, 2009). Neo-liberal policy aims to correct market 'distortions' that deter exports and promote un-economical import substitution, reform public-sector institutions and improve the efficiency of state enterprises, and support non-traditional exports (World Bank, 1981). The shift to neo-liberalism and structural adjustment programs (SAP) has had direct impact on people's lives and well-being (Peet and Hartwick, 2009). Neo-liberal market-oriented policies have been accompanied by increasing economic inequality, growing inequity in key social determinants of health, and a notable transformation in the trend in global health (as measured by life expectancy) from convergence between the Global North and Global South before 1980 to divergence afterwards (Taylor, 2009).

Method: The Role Play Framework
The role play exercise was developed in order to explore and compare theories of development – in this case, dependency theory and neo-liberalism – in a robust and dynamic manner. The underlying assumption was that role play can actively engage students in learning processes, can facilitate engagement with theoretical concepts, and can encourage students to consider theories and associated policies from the perspective of different stakeholders (DeNeve and Heppner, 1997; Ertmer *et al*, 2010). All students were enrolled in a course-work based Master of International Development degree, and this particular subject focused on contemporary approaches and theories of development. Students' backgrounds included both local students (i.e. Australian citizens) and international students from, for example,

Papua New Guinea, Sierra Leone, Argentina and Thailand. While a few students had previous professional experience working in international development programs and organisations, the majority were studying with a view to becoming involved and working in this field in the future. Accordingly, the role play was a provocative process that required students to place themselves in the unfamiliar positions of different stakeholders, and to consider development theories and their impact.

The structure of the activity was broadly informed by other role play exercises that have aimed to engage students in topics including, for example, sustainable development (Buchs and Blanchard, 2011) and the oil boom and Dutch disease (van der Meulen Rodgers, 1996). The challenge for this role play, however, was to engage students in complex and contradictory theoretical terrain. In the weeks leading up to the activity, student seminars focused on dependency theory and neo-liberalism in the context of international development. Students were required to read the assigned articles and chapters in advance, focusing on dependency theory and neo-liberalism (i.e. Dos Santos, 1970; James, 1997; Kay, 1993; Palley, 2005; Peet and Hartwick, 2009).

The week before the activity, students were provided with an information sheet that outlines the scenario and role play framework, and includes discussion questions (see Table 1). The basic premise for the meeting is as follows: in response to ongoing global inequalities in development, a high-level meeting has been called to try and decide whether 'core' countries and powers are actively under-developing the Global South, or whether global neo-liberalism offers the opportunity for everyone (including the Global South) to develop. The role-play was given greater realism by focusing theoretical discussion on regional and context-specific initiatives: in this case, students decided to further ground the discussion around the (under)-development of a hypothetical low-income country in Sub-Saharan Africa.

In a seminar of 18 students, around 20 minutes was required to provide an overview of the activity and for students to select a role/organisation to represent. The interest groups included International Financial Institutions (i.e. World Bank/ International Monetary Fund), the U.S.A., a large trans-national company (e.g. Shell), a local community group (or social movement), a hypothetical Sub-Saharan African country, and a newly-industrialised country (e.g. South Korea). Students formed groups of three and chose their preferred roles, a process which involved some negotiation and movement between groups. In the week leading up to the activity, students had opportunities to seek information about their assigned role (via academic sources, published reports, internet searches): they sought out information about their assigned roles, involvement in and experience of development processes, associated policy positions, and information with which to critique other groups (e.g. the failures of structural adjustment programmes in relation to human development outcomes).

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Topic:

Dependency theory/neo-liberalism

Context and aims:

International meeting of key actors, to discuss the causes of and solutions to 'under-development' in a hypothetical country in Sub-Saharan Africa

Discuss the causes of and solutions to under-development in Sub-Saharan Africa, according to dependency theory and neo-liberalism:

■ understand the key concepts of dependency theory and neo-liberalism,

■ identify related policy/program responses to development (e.g. import-substitution industrialisation, structural adjustment programs),

■ discuss tensions between and within these theories.

Pre-meeting preparation:

Discuss instructions and choose role/organisation

Assign readings (Dos Santos 1970; James 1997; Kay 1993; Palley 2005; Peet and Hartwick 2009)

Research and prepare opening statement/arguments (individually in week preceding 'meeting', and as a group for 30 minutes before 'meeting').

Key roles/ organisations:

1) Trans-national company (e.g. Shell)

2) Local community group

3) International Financial Institutions (e.g. World Bank/IMF)

4) U.S.A.

5) South Korea, government representatives (i.e. a newly industrialised country)

6) Sub-Saharan African country, government representatives

Led discussion:

Three minute opening statement that represents the views of your group (groups are to represent the positions that their role/group would be likely to take).

Open discussion to respond to other group's positions.

Final open (facilitated) discussion. Possible questions to explore:

■ Does dependency theory adequately account for issues of 'under-development'?

■ What other factors could be contributing to global inequities?

■ Does the success of the advanced industrial economies serve as a model for developing economies?

■ Is the market (e.g. neo-liberal free trade) a sufficient mechanism to distribute wealth?

■ Is there a difference between economic growth (e.g. GDP) and development?

■ Is integration into the global economy a good choice for 'developing countries'?

Wrap-up:

Review key theories: dependency theory, neo-liberalism

Evaluate activity

TABLE 1 Activity description

On the day of the activity, students broke off into their chosen groups for thirty minutes to further develop their position statements and consider how they might respond to other statements. They then reconvened to hold the role play meeting. The meeting itself lasted for approximately one hour. During the exercise, the lecturer took on the role of the meeting facilitator, asking each group in turn to provide an opening statement and then facilitating discussion. In the first round of discussion, each role-grouping was provided with opportunity to respond to each other's opening statements (including through drawing on practical and policy examples); in the second round of discussion, groups were encouraged to re-engage explicitly with broader theoretical questions about the causes of and solutions for 'under-development'.

Critical Analysis of Learning Process and Outcomes

In their opening statements and the subsequent discussion, each group put forward their (theoretical) perspective on the causes of under-development in the hypothetical Sub-Saharan country, and presented their policy recommendations. For example, the local community group broadly agreed with the primary arguments of dependency theory – highlighting the exploitative relation of the Global North to the Global South in terms of resource extraction and unfair terms of trade – and recommended greater emphasis on nationally driven growth supported by local participation of communities. The transnational company, who definitively supported neo-liberalism, argued for elevation of the market as a means of achieving socio-economic development including via private investment and removal of barriers to international trade. The students representing the United States suggested under-development could be addressed through neo-liberal reforms and market-oriented policy, but were adamant that development of the Global South should also serve their own vested economic interests.

Beneath these statements, however, lie thorny concerns about how to represent actors, contexts, processes and inter-relationships (Murphy, 2006). During the debate, the most colourful and forceful statements came from those students representing organisations/interest groups that they perceived to be highly divergent from their own personal views: the representatives of Shell who argued, along neo-liberal lines, that participation in the global market place would lift impoverished countries out of economic and social suffering; the World Bank executive (a student with an African background) who argued – tongue in cheek – that while they supported local participation it was often necessary to hire foreign expert consultants. This tendency, to develop a caricatured perspective of their chosen roles, highlighted a key tension of the role-play activity.

There is the concern that role-play encourages simplified and unified perspectives, which skate over areas of divergence within roles and intersections between roles. This is reminiscent of the way in which anthropologists or ethnographers histori-

cally wrote and spoke of bounded cultural wholes (see Pieterse, 1998). However, as Bauman argues (1998), 'boundary-making' is not confined to ethnographers: boundaries are also created where teachers/students view their pedagogical and learning experiences as excursions into 'other' people's lives (such as other development experiences and cultures) (see Roman, 2003). In this activity, most roles were assumed to have a relatively unified position that could be stepped in and out of by students within role groupings. Yet there is widespread consensus within the social sciences – including anthropology and international development studies – that identities are in fact multiply authored, a shifting paradox, a negotiation. Similarly, many of the roles in the learning activity described here represent 'arenas of struggle' within which more than one perspective exists. So while the role-play provided a process for interactive engagement with economic and development theories and student-led learning, it also set up a space within which the voices of different interest groups were readily stereotyped. This is problematic for role-play in the area of international development because it promotes a compressed and essentialist vision of global processes and actors, a vision that can persist beyond the classroom.

As discussed above, active learning methods – such as role-play – have been heralded as effective methods for developing student engagement and critical thinking (Ertmer *et al*, 201; Thompson *et al*, 2006). Ideally, role-play encourages students to look more deeply into a particular perspective, and consider how broader contexts can impact on specific stakeholders (Ertmer *et al*, 2010; Sogunro, 2004). Andreotti and de Souza (2008) argue that 'learning to learn' is about 'crossing the boundaries of the comfort zone'. In this activity, it was anticipated that being asked to represent theories and fields of knowledge that diverge from personal perspectives required students to cross their 'comfort zone' and interrogate and represent concepts and consider the experiences of different actors in new ways. However, the role-play exercise discussed here raised questions about these assumptions and expectations. Students who moved beyond their 'comfort zone' to represent roles or actors to which they were ideologically opposed (e.g. transnational companies, international financial institutions) tended to develop a stereotyped perspective thereby missing the opportunity to identify negotiation and struggle within stakeholder groups or roles. Those students who represented groups somewhat aligned with their own ideological perspectives (e.g. local community groups) found it more difficult to present a unified position, yet they were better able to interrogate the complexities of their role and their relationship to other groups. These groups had stronger capacity to present arguments that did not imply fixed relations between the local and global (or 'South' and 'North') or present their roles in absolute ideological, national or otherwise essentialist terms (see Roman, 2003). This suggests that students representing roles aligned with their own views had a stronger sense of responsibility and commitment to present the details and tensions of their position; those representing roles to which they inherently objected (e.g. the

students representing the United States of America who implied the country was engineering development policy to its own advantage) had less sense of responsibility and could take a strong stance on simplified views they did not hold themselves.

A second critical issue to emerge was that of student identity and representation within the role-play. What kind of subjectivity is produced when using role-play, involving students from diverse backgrounds, to teach international development theory (see also Razack, 2009)? The range of personal experience of students – including those from the Global South, those from the Global North, students with refugee backgrounds, and those who have worked in development settings or with marginalised communities in the Global North – provided rich grounding from which to consider development theories. As Goodyear (2002) argues, pre-existing knowledge determines student's ability to make sense of and situate new information, and this is an important means of engagement with the content of study. However, it is also important that students participating in a role-play are able to recognize how identity is represented through their interactions and reactions to each other, and reflect on how this produces entitlement (or not) to occupy and speak for particular roles and actors (see Razack, 2009).

Tensions around identity and representation were evident in the role-play activity. There was the danger that international students from the Global South would feel an expectation to provide the voice of developing countries, which raises a number of problems. First, it can solidify development discourse and debate into rigid dichotomies of the Global North and Global South and obscure the interactive and constitutive aspects of geo-political identities and representation. In this class, the majority of students were struggling with competing notions of the so-called Global South as representing a site of suffering, oppression and disadvantage with its people bearing the brunt of global injustices, versus alternative views in which the Global South is explicitly valued for unique and complex forms of agriculture, manufacturing and consumption (as alternatives to the dominant capitalist model), greater respect for the environment, and powerful social movements (Murphy, 2006). Accordingly, students from the Global South were called upon to provide evidence for these two notions. So while discussion was unsettled and dynamic in terms of what the Global South represents, there was a pervasive narrative suggesting the Global North and the Global South are identifiably separate spaces.

Second, there is the risk that students from the Global South are seen as extensions of an authentic community located in developing countries, implying that they (and their experiences) belong to developing countries. While their accounts of experience in the 'Global South' and critical discussion of global processes provide nuanced and grounded contexts for debate, there is also the danger they are expected to represent the Global South and give voice to the truth of the matter at hand (Ignatieff, 1993). This places students from the Global South in a difficult

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position, particularly in the artificial setting of a role-play focusing on development and under-development. Certainly, their perspectives and lived experiences provide important contribution to discussion and debate, but they may not be comfortable speaking on behalf of their country or, indeed, the Global South. For example, one student from a South-East Asian middle-income nation (dropping momentarily out of her role to clarify a point) qualified her views with the statement that she comes from an economically privileged family background. Conversely, another student with an African background felt compelled to talk on behalf of Africans and the persistent suffering and difficulties associated with a history of colonisation. At the same time, students from the global North were conscious of how they occupy and represent privileged spaces and were concerned to distance themselves from those institutions and roles that they regarded as oppressive, counter-productive and exploitative (e.g. transnational companies, international finance institutions). The complexities of identity and representation in this role-play highlighted the importance of openly addressing these unsettling issues and allowing for critical reflection within the classroom on ownership of perspectives and speaking on behalf of others. These are learning areas that, on reflection, should be incorporated into the role-play as well as the more theoretical learning objectives: i.e. how do students' own positions and backgrounds influence their understanding and presentation of roles?

Despite these challenges, the role-play did support and enhance student learning. A few aspects of the role-play contributed substantively to the vibrancy of the discussion and attenuated some of the challenges discussed above. The tendency to present caricatured versions of roles was offset somewhat by encouraging all members of a group to give input to the debate, even where their views were not fully aligned with others within the group. Groups were also given time (in separate rooms) to discuss their position and argument and develop opening statements: during this time some of the complexities and contradictions of different roles were teased out and debate was encouraged. There was a risk that the simplicity of the 'developed' and 'undeveloped' dichotomy, while analytically understood by students as problematic and inaccurate, might persist as a basic framework within which to discuss development theories (Murphy, 2006). Inclusion of an 'emerging' or 'newly-industrialised' country in the role-play allowed more meaningful debate that took some account of dynamic development processes and highlighted the diverse economic geographies that exist in the Global South.

In terms of process, students were encouraged to form groups with people they had not previously worked , the lay-out of the room was configured so that all students were located around a large table and included in the debate, students were encouraged by the facilitator to respond directly to the views and arguments of other interest groups/roles, and students were able to call for short 'time-out' periods in

order to temporarily halt the role-play and clarify theoretical or policy points. These processes supported an inclusive, engaged and unintimidating discussion.

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While the activity sheet provided a structured set of discussion questions to ensure that the debate remained focused on the theoretical and related policy areas of interest, a semi-structured approach to the conversation allowed spontaneity and direct response to the position statements of different stakeholders. In addition to theoretical considerations, students were expected to discuss concrete examples of policy and programmatic initiatives and outcomes – e.g. Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, Structural Adjustment Lending, import substitution industrialisation – in order to provide a grounding framework for the discussion. This required students to speak about development, under-development and globalisation processes in terms of complex and real interactions within and between nations, non-government organisations, international agencies, corporations, and social groups. This grounded discussion provided a material context through which to consider 'uneven, contradictory, and often conflicting interests of power in the social relations that define the stakes in and boundaries of belonging to particular communities' (Roman 2003: 283). After the conclusion of the debate, key theoretical concepts and discussion points were re-iterated and consolidated. Students also had opportunity to consolidate and expand their understanding of dependency theory and neo-liberalism – as well as various other theories e.g. sustainable development, post-developmentalism – through on-going seminars, readings, and discussion. Written assignments for the subject included a reflective essay in response to provocative and contrasting quotes by Robert Chambers (2008) and Wolfgang Sachs (2010), and a theoretically informed research paper focusing on student's chosen area of interest.

A short evaluation was handed out to students at the end of the role-play session, asking them to rate how the activity affected their understanding of the seminar materials and readings. The activity received favourable responses, with the overwhelming majority of students indicating that the activity encouraged class participation, supported understanding of the lecture and reading materials, and was more interesting than a standard seminar discussion. In the written evaluation comments, students indicated that the activity helped them to: 'see things from another perspective', 'cement the key issues and theories we have discussed', 'see how these issues are implemented in policy and transferred to a ground level', and 'put what we read in the papers and books in to practice.' The activity provided a dynamic context within which to grapple with theories of development – namely dependency theory and neo-liberalism – and students were motivated to understand and discuss theories and their application (in a hypothetical sub-Saharan African country).

It has been widely argued that role-play exercises can contribute to positive learning environment (Buchs and Blanchard, 2011). Students' responses to the role-play activity were very favourable, yet it is critical to recognise and respond to some of the weaknesses and challenges of the activity – as discussed above – in particular: the risk of creating compressed and stereotyped understandings of particular roles or actors; problems of representation and identity within seminars that include students from diverse regions. Some of these challenges could be addressed by further developing the role-play as a cumulative activity that builds over a number of weeks. This could allow over-simplifications and caricatures to be teased out and a fuller position of development theories and contexts to emerge. Finally, it is also worth noting that the challenge of grappling with complexity, representation and identity in development education can emerge and must be addressed in any pedagogical process, including student presentations, general class discussion and written assignments.

Conclusion

The theoretical foundations of international development are diverse, often contradictory, and typically complex. Dependency and neo-liberal theories, for example, have significant points of tension and contradiction. The role-play described above did not cover theoretical concepts and application in the level of detail that is possible in a lecture/seminar format, and it is important to consider whether it is time well spent. From the perspective of students, the debate constituted an opportunity to interactively engage with theoretical content, and consider how theories underpin policy and programs in the field of international development. Importantly, the activity illustrated the complexity of translating theoretical approaches into practical and policy-level responses. It provided opportunity to work collaboratively and understand and compare different theories and values.

As Irving *et al* (2005) argues, it is important to focus on how meaningful 'global' learning takes place and processes for increasing critical thinking, rather than a simple expansion of student's knowledge via lecture content. The process of learning, not simply the specific material covered, is important (Wagner, 2005). Based on observation and student evaluation and responses, this role-play offered an engaging and interesting forum through which to wrestle with development theories (that might otherwise be regarded by students as dry and inaccessible concepts). The activity could be readily adapted to engage with other theoretical areas and paradoxes (e.g. alternative development and post-development; sustainable development and neo-liberalism).

Role-play is an effective and dynamic use of class time for students of international development, in this case for a subject that engages with theories of development. However, the role-play discussed here suggests that there are a number of problematic tendencies that need to be understood and managed. In a role-play activity,

students are presenting a constructed view that is (frequently) different to their own, and this can introduce caricatured positions and binaries such as us/them, and privilege/subordinate: this radically simplifies international development issues and processes of globalisation. It is therefore essential that students and facilitators encourage discussion that critically analyses how actors are 'continuously shaped, implicated and intricately connected through our histories and current realities' (Razack, 2009: 19). Group role-play must focus in on points of tension and disagreement within each role. Further, while role-play allows participants to take on different positions and positioning to their own, personal identities remain as an undercurrent. Students should have opportunity to be aware of and reflect together on how identity is represented within the role-play and consider how they locate themselves and interact with each other based on their own backgrounds. With these challenges in mind, role-play can provide an approach to learning about development theories that encourages input from personal practice and experience, supports critical reflection and debate, and allows lively dialogue among students who are representing views and understandings of development theory and practice through the lens of different actors and stakeholders.

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