

STEP IN

Developing Roleplay Pedagogies for Identity & Acculturation Processes in Migrant Youth Work

Prepared by the Consortium of Step-in: Developing Roleplay Pedagogies for Identity & Acculturation Processes in Migrant Youth Work

Erasmus+: Key Action 2- Small-scale partnerships in youth (KA210-YOU)
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This publication is the product of a co-creation process within the framework of the Step-In Project. The views within do not necessarily reflect the views of the project consortium.

The “Step-in” project was developed to address the need for integration and acculturation support for young migrants and minorities, particularly LGBTQ+ youth, through role-play and simulation activities.

This casebook is the result of our collaboration with TEIS, Eurobug, KAMM, and Fundacja Młodzie dla Europy during the training course in Hungary.

During the course, participants engaged in a variety of role-play and simulation activities and were later encouraged to design and test their own. This casebook presents a collection of these methods, which can be used by educators and teachers to facilitate learning on diverse topics such as social media, capitalism, gender, and more, while also fostering cooperation and communication skills.



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PROJECT STRUCTURE

A1: Kick-off Meeting & Roundtable Discussions

- Engaging with local communities to assess needs.
- Collecting existing methods through surveys and focus groups.
- Establishing a shared foundation for the project among partners.

A2: Training Course – “Autumn Academy” (6 days, Hungary)

- One-week training bringing together participants from all partner countries.
- Exploring a wide variety of role-play and simulation methods.
- Supporting participants in designing their own educational activities by the end of the course.

A3: Local Implementation & Casebook

- Partners organized local events to test and adapt the activities developed during the training.
- Each partner hosted a multiplier event to share outcomes with a wider audience.
- Compilation of tested activities into the final Step-in Casebook for educators and youth workers.



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Town Hall Debate

 Goals	Understand social dynamics Practice conflict management
 No. Participants	10-20 people
 Location	Preferably inside
 Materials	Cards of roles
 Duration	1h Activity; 30 min Debrief

In the fictional town of San Ditto, two rival gangs – the Big Dogs and the Red Scarfs – are locked in a territorial dispute. A proposed road construction threatens to tip the balance of power, offering economic and logistical advantages to one side while disadvantaging the other.

The town magistrate has called a public hearing to decide whether the road will be built. Alongside the gangs, two other influential groups – the Government and the Community – join the debate, each with their own priorities and hidden agendas.

This immersive debate exercise allows participants to take on unique roles, defend their positions, and experience the complexities of negotiation and decision-making.

Learning Outcomes

Conflict management – navigating disputes between groups with competing interests.

Time management – preparing and delivering concise arguments within strict time limits.

Social dynamics – understanding the impact of social class, influence, and alliances.

Empathy & perspective-taking – experiencing situations from diverse viewpoints.

Setup

Arrange 5 tables: one for each group (Big Dogs, Red Scarfs, Government, Community, and the Magistrate).

Place a road prop (string, tape, or miniature) in the middle of the room between the towns.

Add sound effects of a busy road for immersion.

Prepare individual character cards with backstory, personality traits, and key talking points.

Have a ballot box ready for the final vote.



Process

1. Briefing (5 min)

Magistrate explains the situation, objectives, and rules.
Participants receive role cards and background information.

2. Group Preparation (10 min)

Each group privately discusses their strategy and prepares arguments.

3. Opening Statements (Round 1)

Each group gets 2 minutes to present their position to the town hall.

4. Rebuttal Statements (Round 2)

Each group gets another 2 minutes to counter others' arguments.

5. Open Debate (10–15 min)

Any participant may raise their hand to question, challenge, or respond.
Magistrate moderates turn-taking.

6. Voting

All participants (including the magistrate, if desired) vote anonymously.

7. Votes are counted in the ballot box.

Debriefing

How did your assigned role influence the way you approached the debate?

Were there moments when you wanted to agree with another group but couldn't due to your role?

How did time constraints affect your ability to argue effectively?

What negotiation or persuasion strategies worked best?

How does this fictional scenario reflect real-world political, social, or class conflicts?

Facilitator's Notes

Highlight the ways participants navigated conflicting interests.

Encourage discussion on compromise vs. winning outright.

Draw parallels to real-world urban planning and governance.

Invite participants to share their emotional experience – did they feel frustrated, empowered, unheard?



Gendara

 Goals	Explore how gender constructs shape personal choices and social belonging.
 No. Participants	10-20 people
 Location	Preferably inside, but can be done outside
 Materials	Cards of roles; questions (https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1v_G3xm02grGcRsSiltb7FiloUKkPa-le?)
 Duration	1h Activity; 30 min Debrief

In a fictional world, individuals do not receive a gender at birth. Instead, upon reaching maturity, they must participate in a sacred ceremony called Gendara, where they choose one of two socially recognized genders that will define their role in life forever. This system is widely accepted by society, yet challenged by a growing group who question its rigidity and defend more fluid understandings of identity.

To complicate the story, three individuals from the “real world” – where gender is assigned at birth – are accidentally transported into this universe. Their perspectives collide with the established norms of the Gendara society, creating tensions, debates, and opportunities for reflection.

This immersive role-play simulation encourages participants to explore how gender constructs shape personal choices, social belonging, and systems of power.



Setup

Prepare character cards (envelopes not to be opened until instructed).

Create a forest of self-exploration with ropes hanging from the ceiling, each carrying reflective questions.

Play calm, atmospheric music to set the mood.

Use gender-aware name tags (with color codes if helpful).

Ensure a safe and inclusive environment: inform participants they may step out at any time.

Learning Outcomes

Understand the concepts of gender essentialism, fluidity, and non-binary identities.

Experience both the perspective of marginalized voices and defenders of traditional norms.

Explore one's own emotions and reflections around gender identity.

Develop empathy and critical thinking about the complexities of societal expectations.



Process

1.Introduction (5 min)

Facilitator explains the activity, safety measures, and rules.
Distribute sealed envelopes with character cards.

2. Split Narratives

The 3 “real-world outsiders” are taken aside by a facilitator, who explains their unique backstory.
The rest of the group is introduced to the Gendara society and may now open their character cards.

3. Forest of Self-Exploration (10 min)

Both groups eventually enter the immersive “forest,” answering reflective questions in silence.
This stage helps participants connect emotionally to their roles.

4. Role Interaction (15 min)

Participants begin interacting in character, discovering connections and conflicts with others.

5. Village Meeting (15 min)

Elders call a gathering to debate the value and fairness of the Gendara system.
Each side presents their arguments.

6. Ceremony Twist

The Shaman announces that the Gendara ceremony is cancelled this year.
Instead, the group is invited to hold a Celebration of Identities, embracing diversity.

7. Exit from Roles (5 min)

Participants return to the forest, revisit the reflective questions, but now answer them as themselves.

8. Debrief (20–30 min)

Group reflection and facilitated discussion.

Debriefing

How did your assigned role influence the way you approached the debate?

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How did time constraints affect your ability to argue effectively?

What negotiation or persuasion strategies worked best?

How does this fictional scenario reflect real-world political, social, or class conflicts?

Facilitator's Notes

Highlight the ways participants navigated conflicting interests.

Encourage discussion on compromise vs. winning outright.

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Build your house

Goals	Practice teamwork, negotiation, and communication skills
No. Participants	10-20 people
Location	Preferably inside, but can be done outside
Materials	Cards of roles; cards of resources
Duration	40 min Activity; 30 min Debrief

In this simulation, participants take on the roles of families settling in a new town. Each family wants to build a house, but resources are distributed unevenly according to social status. Some families have more money or access to resources, while others struggle with disadvantages.

The main task is for families to construct a house out of cubes by collecting, buying, or trading resources from the marketplace or work corner. Along the way, unexpected challenges arise, forcing participants to adapt their strategies.

This activity combines teamwork, negotiation, and creativity with a deeper reflection on inequality, privilege, and resource distribution in society.

Setup

Prepare three family “lands” (tables for each team).

Place resource stations:

Marketplace – where cubes can be bought with money.

Work Corner – where resources can be earned through tasks.

Provide:

Cubes (6 of each color), raw materials (e.g., 3 water, 3 clay for making bricks), play money (50 paper units), role tags, and written descriptions.

Assign roles:

3 families with a different social class with varying money, resource access, and restrictions.

Each family member has unique abilities or limitations (e.g., only allowed to negotiate, only allowed to work, etc.).

1 Marketplace Manager

Controls prices of cubes and resources.

May adjust availability to create scarcity.

1 Work Corner Manager

Provides opportunities for participants to complete small tasks to earn resources.

Can introduce delays or difficulties.

Learning Outcomes

Practice teamwork, negotiation, and communication skills.

Develop strategy, resource management, and problem-solving under constraints.

Experience first-hand the challenges of unequal resource distribution.

Reflect on social struggles, privilege, and fairness.



Process

1. Introduction (5 min)

The facilitator explains the story: three families move into a new town and must build homes. Introduce roles and distribute role tags (without revealing all advantages/disadvantages to others).

2. Instructions (5 min)

Explain the rules of resource gathering, buying, and exchanging. Clarify that the goal is to successfully build a family house out of cubes.

3. Main Game (20–30 min)

Families begin building with their resources.

They may:

- Use their initial supplies.
- Buy resources at the marketplace.
- Perform tasks at the work corner.
- Negotiate and trade with other families.

4. Challenges (every 10 min)

Facilitator introduces new obstacles (e.g., rising prices, resource shortages, sudden taxes, or natural disasters).

Optional: Add hints or secret opportunities for families to gain resources.

5. End of Game

After time runs out, each family presents their house, finished or unfinished.

6. Debrief (15–20 min)

Participants step out of their roles and reflect.

Debriefing

How did it feel to work within your family's restrictions and advantages?

What strategies did your group use to succeed (or fail) in building your house?

How did negotiation and communication influence the outcome?

Did the uneven distribution of resources feel fair? How does this reflect real-world inequalities?

What would you change about the system to make it more just?

Facilitator's Notes

Encourage participants to reflect on both the game mechanics (teamwork, negotiation) and the social metaphor (privilege, inequality).

Make space for emotions: some groups may feel frustration, which mirrors real-life experiences.

End with a discussion on what fairness and equality mean in different contexts.



Only Murders in the Mansion

 Goals	To explore class and privilege
 No. Participants	12-30 people
 Location	Inside
 Materials	<u>Introduction to the role-play sheet, invitation cards, role name tags, role cards</u>
 Duration	75-100 min Activity; 30 min Debrief

This activity is a murder mystery role-play set at a celebrity's glamorous birthday party. Participants are assigned roles divided by social class, each with distinct privileges, restrictions, and objectives. When a murder suddenly occurs during the party, the guests must investigate, debate, and vote on who they believe is the killer.

The twist lies not only in solving the mystery but also in how class and privilege shape participants' power, access, and influence during the game. Some voices are louder, others are silenced, and frustration builds as inequality becomes more apparent.

- Explore privilege and inequality in a social system.
- Understand how class status affects participation, influence, and justice.
- Recognize the dangers of mob mentality in group decision-making.
- Experience feelings of frustration, exclusion, or empowerment within an unequal system.



Facilitators may also take on roles (e.g., hosts, security, or journalists).



Process

1. Introduction & Energiser (5–10 min)

Facilitators explain safety rules and the purpose of the game.
Quick energiser to prepare participants.

2. Immersion (5 min)

Music, lights, decorations set the party mood.
Participants step into their roles.
Distribute character cards and name tags.

3. Party Begins (10–15 min)

Mingling, chatting, fulfilling role objectives.
Grand entrance of the Royals to establish class hierarchy.

4. First Murder (5 min)

A guest is “killed.” The dead body is discovered.
Facilitator announces that everyone must vote on who the killer is.

5. Voting Round (5–10 min)

All players vote on who they believe is guilty.
The “accused” is sent to jail (removed from the game).
If guilty, the game ends; if innocent, the game continues.

6. Subsequent Rounds (as time allows)

More murders may occur.
More rounds of debate and voting follow.

7. End of Game

Conclude after the killer is discovered, or after a set number of rounds.

8. Debrief (30 min)

Step out of character and reflect.

Debriefing

How did your class status affect your ability to participate or influence others?

Did you feel your role gave you too much or too little power?

How did the group make decisions during the voting process?

Did mob mentality affect the outcome?

How does this fictional setting reflect real-world privilege, inequality, and justice systems?

Facilitator's Notes

Draw attention to participants' **emotional reactions**: frustration, power, exclusion, or dominance.

Highlight how **class divides influenced fairness** in the game.

Encourage critical thinking about justice systems, privilege, and inequality in society.



Cyberfrost

 Goals	Explore alternative systems of economy and cooperation. Understand the dangers of unchecked capitalism and social inequality.
 No. Participants	12-30 people
 Location	Inside
 Materials	Cards with roles, letters
 Duration	1,5 h Activity; 30 min Debrief

In a post-apocalyptic ice age, known as the Cyberforst, the world is dominated by greedy corpoRATs, hoarding all remaining heat and resources. Desperate and freezing, the rebellious cats rise up to challenge this system of exploitation.

Hope arrives from beyond: two intergalactic species – the Cybernetic Snow Leopards and the Cybernetic Undead Pink Panthers – who form the Leoparlament. They offer wisdom, technology, and a chance at survival, but only if Earth's creatures can learn from past mistakes and imagine alternatives to destructive capitalism.

This playful and surreal role-play uses humor, sci-fi, and metaphor to help participants critically reflect on capitalism, exploitation, and possible futures of cooperation.

Setup

Divide participants into 4 groups:

Rebellious Cats: Must gather allies and challenge the CorpoRATs while surviving the cold.

CorpoRATs: Defend wealth and power at all costs, using manipulation and resource control.

Snow Leopards: Act as diplomatic guides, reminding participants of alternative economic models.

Pink Panthers: Encourage radical re-imaginings of society, disrupt existing power dynamics.

Prepare immersive materials:

Burnt or weathered letters and envelopes for instructions.

Face paint, costumes, and badges to identify factions.

Props such as “heat tokens,” resource cards, or technology artifacts.

Pre-recorded voice messages for secret instructions to the rebels.

Arrange the space with cold zones (dim lighting, icy sounds) and warm zones (cozy, firelit feeling).

Learning Outcomes

Understand the dangers of unchecked capitalism and social inequality.

Explore alternative systems of economy and cooperation.

Practice teamwork, negotiation, and strategic thinking in a creative scenario.

Experience immersion as a way to think critically about real-world problems.



Process

1. Energizer (5 min)

Quick physical or creative game to warm up.

2. Introduction & Storytelling (10 min)

Facilitator narrates the Cyberforst setting.

Divide participants into groups and distribute sealed role envelopes.

3. Transformation (10 min)

Participants decorate themselves with face paint, costumes, and badges.

Groups are introduced to their roles and objectives.

4. Exploration & Interaction (30–40 min)

Groups discuss internally, then interact with others.

CorpoRATs negotiate, exploit, or trade.

Rebels attempt sabotage or alliance-building.

Snow Leopards and Pink Panthers intervene with alternative visions.

5. Resolution Phase (20 min)

Groups gather in a Leoparlament to decide:

Will the world stay under CorpoRAT domination?

Will cats and allies build a new system together?

Or will the cold consume them all?

6. Debrief (30 min)

Participants step out of character.

Facilitator leads guided reflection.

Debriefing

How did it feel to play your role? Did your character's perspective differ from your own?

What strategies did groups use to survive, resist, or dominate?

What alternatives to capitalism emerged during the game?

How does this fictional metaphor reflect real-world struggles with inequality and resource distribution?

What lessons from the Cyberforst could apply to our own society?

Facilitator's Notes

Keep the tone playful yet meaningful – the metaphor is absurd, but the issues are real.

Highlight any creative solutions participants imagined.

Allow participants to vent emotions (frustration, excitement, laughter).

End with hope: emphasize the importance of collective imagination in shaping better futures.

Algorithms

 Goals	Media literacy Critical thinking Algorithms and Social media influence
 No. Participants	12-18 people
 Location	Inside
 Materials	Cards of roles, cards of news
 Duration	45 min Activity; 30 min Debrief

This activity explores the hidden dynamics of algorithms and avatars on social media. Participants take on the roles of either avatars (users) or algorithms (content pushers) and experience firsthand how digital behavior, manipulation, and targeted influence shape online interactions.

Avatars embody online personas with specific interests and values, while algorithms compete to capture their attention by feeding tailored content, clickbait, and “likes.” Through structured rounds of interaction, players witness how data traces are exploited, how influence grows subtly over time, and how the attention economy pressures both sides.

By stepping into these roles, participants are invited to reflect on the mechanisms of algorithmic control, the illusion of choice in online spaces, and the emotional impact of constant digital persuasion.

Setup

Divide into 5 groups of 3–4 participants.

Select 4 volunteers as Avatars; the rest form Algorithm teams.

Separate Avatars and Algorithms for secret instructions.

Avatars

Receive a character card (profile with traits, interests, biases).

Play silently: they cannot speak to algorithms, only signal approval/disapproval (👍 / 👎).

Each round, they choose content cards that fit their profile best.

Algorithms

Compete to feed as many content cards (clickbait/social media posts) as possible to the avatars.

Allowed one question per round to avatars (yes/no signal response).

Track avatar preferences on a shared flipchart.

Use likes/hearts (coins) to bribe or persuade.

Learning Outcomes

Experience how algorithms push and shape online choices.

Understand the dynamics of digital influence and targeted manipulation.

Explore how attention is commodified and gamified.

Reflect on emotions and confusion in the digital landscape.

Practice teamwork, observation, and strategic thinking.



Process

1. Energizer (5 min)

Group warm-up: “Pass the Electricity” (chain reaction game) to highlight togetherness, then abruptly split into avatars vs. algorithms.

2. Introduction (5–10 min)

Facilitators assign roles, but DO NOT reveal what the simulation is about.

3. Rounds of Play

3.1 Round 1 (12 min): Algorithms present 1–2 cards per rotation. Avatars choose in silence.

3.2 Round 2 (6 min): Faster pace, less time to decide. Algorithms push harder.

3.3 Round 3 (3–4 min): Ultra-fast scroll effect. Algorithms can drop multiple cards at once; avatars must pick quickly, often without reflection.

Resolution Phase (5 min)

Avatars reveal coin totals. Group decides if the game continues or ends.

Debriefing

Step 1: Release (5 min)

Shake body, cathartic vocal exercise to reset.

Step 2: Reflection (10 min)

How did you feel in your role?

Did avatars feel “in control”? Did algorithms feel “in power”?

What strategies worked? What failed?

Step 3: Reveal (5 min)

Facilitators explain the real metaphor: algorithms harvesting data, shaping feeds, and competing for attention.

Step 4: Critical Discussion (10 min)

How does this mirror your own digital experience?

When do you feel manipulated online?

What strategies can help resist algorithmic control?

Facilitator's notes

Prepare extra cards and coins – things move quickly.

Assign two facilitators if possible: one for algorithms, one for avatars.

Use props like badges or lanyards to make roles clear.